Stourbridge
CHRONICLE

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Council recruit more wardens after road safety rethink

LOLLIPOP PATROL BACK IN DEMAND

Report by Marion Brennan

COUNCIL bosses are recruiting for school crossing patrols in Dudley – a year after considering axing their funding.

Back then Dudley Council claimed it could no longer afford to pay for so many lollipop wardens and insisted schools stump up the cash.

But protests forced them into a U-turn over plans to slash numbers.

A safety review had found 70 per cent of patrol sites in the borough did not meet national guidelines, boosting the council's case to axe funding. However, campaigners raised a 20,000-strong petition and demonstrated against the warden cuts.

A Freedom of Information request revealed the number of lollipop men and women in Dudley had fallen by nearly a third.

Figures showed there were 77 crossing wardens in the borough in 2016 – down from 111 in 2012. They also revealed that the number of sites patrolled had fallen from 125 to 80. The downward trend was mirrored by authorities across the Midlands.

Report

The future of lollipop patrols remained uncertain when an independent report last November recommended that the council prioritise implementing 20mph zones outside its schools.

A meeting to discuss the issue failed to draw any conclusions but earlier this year the council committed to fund the service for the next three years.

Now the council has announced it is looking to recruit in 13 locations across the borough.

A post on their website described the work of lollipop wardens as 'valued roles in the community'.

Anyone interested is invited to get in touch for an informal chat and to find out more. Applications can be made in writing via the road safety team, or online through WM Jobs.

All posts are permanent and those selected will be starting work with the new school term in September. Wardens are needed at sites in Dudley, Stourbridge, Halesowen, Quarry Bank, Kingswinford and Netherton.

FIREFIGHTERS SMASH MOUNT EVEREST CHALLENGE

Watch commander Justin Bayliss on the ladder of success for Haden Cross firefighters' charity challenge at Merry Hill

A TEAM of firefighters were on top of the world after conquering the world's highest mountain but without leaving the Black Country.

The 10-strong crew from Blue and Green Watches at Haden Cross fire station climbed the equivalent of 8,848 metre Mount Everest by repeatedly scaling ladders in a charity challenge at the Merry Hill shopping centre – and had enough energy to go even higher.

After completing the seven-hour marathon on Saturday, which took place outside Debenhams, firefighter Matt Crawford said: "We smashed Everest. We thought it would take us six hours but did it in under five. We carried on for a full seven hours because people were still donating money. Merry Hill was very busy and the shoppers were very generous."

The 35-year-old member of Blue Watch added: "There were some very tired firefighters when we finished. The heat was a killer but we had trained hard. There was a lot of hard toil but I was really proud of the lads."

The challenge was set by the Fire Fighters Charity. The team were already fit but spent around 12 weeks adding specialist training.

They had hoped to raise around £1,000 but are likely to have collected four times that through a JustGiving page and collections.

POLICE

Gunshots as four held after violence

YOBS armed with batons attacked a car before gunshots were fired in a night of chaos in Netherton.

The disorder, which left four people in police custody, took place in Lodge Crescent just after 8pm on Saturday.

Police responded to reports of people attacking the occupants of a car. This was followed by reports of gunshots. Officers believe it was in relation to an earlier incident where a 36-year-old woman had been assaulted. Anyone with information should call police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

COURT

Man denies that he killed partner

A NETHERTON man has denied murdering his partner.

Claire Harris died after being found with serious injuries at a house in Cinder Bank, Netherton, on January 24.

Rickardo Wilson, aged 50, from Cinder Bank, pleaded not guilty to her murder when he appeared at Wolverhampton Crown Court on Monday. He was remanded in custody until his trial at Stafford Crown Court on July 2.

FOOTBALL

Legends lining up for Eadesy tribute

FORMER Albion stars have signed up for a charity match on Sunday in memory of a much-loved club mascot and father of two young children. A feast of football will celebrate the life of Richard Eades, who died in December aged 42. The fundraising day will take place at Halesowen Town ground The Grove from 11am with Boing FC taking on an Albion Legends XI at 4.30pm.

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PM IN VISIT TO DUDLEY FIRM

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Minister backing business festival

THE biggest business event in Black Country history is under way with the backing of the nation's Small Business Minister.

Leading figures from the worlds of business, education and politics attended the launch event at the Black Country Living Museum, marking the start of 122 events over a fortnight, which began on Monday, aiming to celebrate the culture, commerce and innovation of the local area.

Corin Crane, chief executive of Black Country Chamber of Commerce who launched the idea of the festival, said: "It's brilliant. Genuinely, I couldn't be more chuffed.

"We have a story to tell in the Black Country," he said, pointing out that the boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall and city of Wolverhampton are home to 36,000 businesses employing around half a million people. Small Business Minister and Black Country boy Andrew Griffiths added his support: "This is a truly brilliant initiative on behalf of the Black Country."

Born in Coseley to a family that ran an engineering business, Mr Griffiths, now MP for Burton upon Trent, said: "You can take the lad out of the Black Country, but you can't take the Black Country out of the lad.

"As somebody who has been in business, somebody from this region, I know what a brilliant place this is, not just to live and work in but to do business. To have an initiative like this, that showcases the best of Black Country business, that brings entrepreneurs – business men and women – together from across the region and shouts about what is great about this area is hugely important."

Mr Griffiths also hailed the £20 billion contribution the growing Black Country made to the UK economy, and spoke of the importance of businesses getting together at events throughout the festival to share best practice and improve productivity.

Tickets must be reserved and are available via www.blackcountrybusinessfestival.com

Thug viciously attacked his pregnant girlfriend

A TEENAGE thug, whose girlfriend lost their child after being savagely attacked by him, has been locked up.

Michael Hurditt reacted violently when she revealed she was expecting.

The assault happened after they had spent an afternoon in a park together during which he had said he loved her, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

The 19-year-old put his victim in a headlock and threw her to the ground before kneeling on her stomach during the incident on August 22. He hit her repeatedly and reportedly shouted: "I am not having a child with you."

The woman had a miscarriage but there was no medical evidence of a direct link between the attack and the loss of the baby, the court heard.

The couple's relationship was punctuated by violence from the defendant, revealed Mr Patrick Kelly, prosecuting. He had been asked to leave her home in July but continued to call. He had tried to push her face down onto hot cooker rings while warning 'I can make it so no other man looks at you', continued Mr Kelly.

Knife

On another occasion he grabbed a kitchen knife, held it to her throat and warned she had until September 1 to get £100 for him. He returned the day after the deadline expired, forced the woman into a pair of children's handcuffs and, held her in a choke hold. She feigned collapse. The victim told officers: "I thought I was going to die. I am utterly terrified of him."

Mr Oliver Woolhouse, defending, said: "He is young, isolated and troubled." The defendant had lived with his father in Wrens Nest Road, Dudley, but is now of no fixed address.

He admitted assault and putting a person in fear of violence by harassment, was given three years nine months detention in a Young Offenders Institution. He was banned from contact with the victim.

Hall gardens open in aid of church

George Williams at his family home Enville Hall, which will be opening its gardens in aid of the village church

THE glorious gardens at a stately home near Stourbridge will be opening to the public to raise funds towards restoration work at a village church.

Enville Hall owners, Peter and Diana Williams, aim to raise at least £1,000 for St Mary's Church after churchyard's retaining wall collapsed. Repair work has already begun.

Rev Martin Soar said: "Peter and Diana are always really supportive of the church. The funds being raised are fantastic.

"The community of Enville village has always been very supportive alongside Kinver and the Black Country. I am really grateful to everyone who will support the event in May and it is a lovely time of year to have it."

George Williams, Peter and Diana's son and assistant estate manager, said: "We are hoping to get enough people to help pay off any repairs at the church, which needs roughly £20,000."

The 10 acres of gardens will be open between 1pm and 5pm on Sunday, May 6, and refreshments will be available. Admission is £5, under-16s free.

Buses take to the road with advice on cancer

FREE cancer advice and support will be available in the Black Country next week as the Macmillan Cancer Support mobile service tours the area.

Cancer information specialists will be on hand to answer questions and provide information as the service – which includes a fleet of six bright green buses – visits Stourbridge, West Bromwich and Birmingham.

As May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month, Macmillan Cancer Support is encouraging people to be aware of the signs and symptoms of the disease.

On Tuesday, May 1, they will visit Birmingham, outside Marks & Spencer in High Street, between 9am and 6pm, while on Wednesday the service will head to West Bromwich, outside Tesco Extra, in Cronehills Linkway, between 9am and 4pm.

Next Friday, May 4, the mobile service will be in Crown Square, in Lower High Street, Stourbridge, between 9am and 4pm. It will also visit Aston on May 3.

Danielle Mellows, cancer information and support specialist for the Midlands, said: "Knowing what changes to look for and when to see your doctor could make a real difference".

For more information, call Macmillan Cancer Support on 0808 808 0000 or visit www.macmillan.org.uk website.

Huge blaze rips through factory

A FACTORY unit in the Black Country has been left gutted after a major blaze attended by several fire crews.

Crews from Oldbury, Smethwick, Handsworth, Tipton and Billesley tackled the fire for around four hours at the unit in Hainge Road, Tividale.

The fire, which was reported just after 6.30pm on Wednesday of last week, was deemed accidental and no injuries were reported.

The blaze left charred walls, twisted metal and a hole in the roof with wooden and cardboard materials reduced to ash.

Meanwhile more than 30 firefighters rushed to Adelle's tanning shop in Castle Street, Coseley, that same evening after a suspected electrical fault in a sun bed caused a fire.

Car caught fire in the early hours

FIREFIGHTERS were called for a car fire in the early hours in Sedgley last Friday. A crew from Dudley Fire Station were called to Padarn Close at 3.58am to deal with the blaze, which they confirmed was accidental. No other vehicles were involved and no one was hurt.

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Community group set to take on youth centre

A COUNCIL-OWNED youth centre looks set to be taken over by a community group.

Dudley Council bosses have agreed for the Lower Gornal Youth Centre to be classed as 'surplus to requirements'. This sets in motion plans for a 'community asset transfer' of the centre, which could see ownership pass from the council to the Dudley Autistic Support Group.

The autistic group is one of a number of community organisations which use the centre, in Temple Street, including a youth club every Friday night.

Council bosses have said the move could see the youth centre, which currently hosts around eight community groups, receive an increased level of funding.

Councillor Anne Millward, cabinet member for children's services, said: "The centre was being run by the council but the Autistic Society has come forward to say could they run it on behalf of all the groups in the area.

" They would still keep the voluntary youth club on a Friday night, which is run by parents.

"The autism support group will take over as a charity which will mean they can bid for funding the council cannot get. It is a community hub and is run for the community by the community."

Garden bonfire explosion warning

A 37-year-old Dudley man had a lucky escape when a garden bonfire exploded into a sheet of flame, sparking a warning from a firefighter.

Near tragedy struck on Friday evening at an address in Robert Street, Lower Gornal, when the individual attempted to ignite a pile of grass cuttings and twigs. He poured petrol onto the garden waste but his match set light to fumes before it even reached the rubbish. The vapour exploded in a flash, causing minor burns to his face and arms.

Watch Commander Chris Hands saids: "He was very lucky. The injuries could easily have been far more serious." He suggested people take their garden rubbish to the tip rather than burning it.

Leak closes school

A DUDLEY school was forced to close on Monday due to a water leak. Russells Hall Primary School, in Overfield Road, was closed to pupils because of lack of water but was re-opening the next day.

Best Irish dancer Ezme Hollick

High-flying Ezme is world champion

DELIGHTED schoolgirl Ezme Hollick is jumping for joy after being crowned Irish Dance Association World Champion.

The 16-year-old out paced scores of challengers from around the globe while stepping her way to the coveted title at Maastricht in the Netherlands earlier this month.

The Wolverhampton Girls High School pupil from Kingswinford was one of 50 contestants from her age group who made the final.

Ezme, who finished 33rd in the event three years ago and came third last year, said: "After watching the other competitors I knew I had a good chance. I normally suffer quite badly with nerves but managed to control them as I prepared for the final dance.

"I knew I would have to perform better than ever before to win and was error-free for the first time in my competitive career."

She still faced a nervous wait when all 25 of those who made the cut were invited onto the stage while the judges announced the result in reverse order.

Ezme continued: "I was really relieved to reach the last five because that put me on the podium and when third place was announced I knew I had done better than last year but still did not think I would win. Then they read out the second placed dancer. I had won. This had been my dream from the moment I started Irish dancing six years ago."

Her mother Sue, also her coach, was invited onto the stage alongside her daughter who confessed: "That was a very special moment." Ezme has followed in the foot steps of both her mother and grandmother who were also talented Irish dancers.

PM gives Windrush apology on factory visit

THE Prime Minister has apologised to Black Country grandmother Paulette Wilson in the wake of the Windrush scandal.

Jamaica-born Mrs Wilson, from Wolverhampton, was threatened with deportation and locked up in an immigration centre, despite having lived in the UK for 50 years.

On a visit to Dudley, Theresa May said she was sorry for Mrs Wilson's treatment and vowed to ensure that everybody from the Windrush generation received the official documents they need.

The Government has been accused of 'institutional racism' over its immigration policy, which has seen some Commonwealth citizens and their children denied welfare support and threatened with expulsion despite legally living in Britain for decades.

Mrs Wilson, 61, was told in January that she could stay in the UK. She had been branded an illegal immigrant in 2015 and spent a week detained in Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre last October.

The Prime Minister visited Netherton office furniture manufacturers Boss Design where she chatted with workers and took a tour of the firm's site in Boss Drive.

Sorry

She said: "Of course I am sorry to Paulette for what has happened, as I'm sorry to anybody from the Windrush generation who has had a bad experience or who is anxious because of what has happened."

She added: "The Windrush generation helped to build this country and they have a right to be here. They are British, they are part of us.

"When they came over the Government at the time did not give them documents to show their right to be here. We need to address that situation.

"Many people now have documents, but the Home Office has set up a special team so anybody from the Windrush generation who is worried should get in touch with the Home Office.

"They are their to work with them to ensure they get the documents they need. This is a generation that is part of us, they are British, they have contributed to this country. I want everybody to be reassured about that and I'm sorry for the anxiety that has been caused."

Mrs Wilson, who arrived in Britain in 1968 and has worked all her life, received a letter telling her she was an illegal immigrant last year. The Home Office say she was granted indefinite leave to remain 'once she 'made the correct application and provided evidence of her residency in the UK'.

Mrs May has said those of the Windrush generation treated unfairly by the Home Office would be compensated 'where appropriate'.

The Prime Minister met machinists and other workers at Boss Design, posing for a selfie with technician upholsterer Derek Whitehouse. Boss Design manufactures and supplies furniture for commercial use, including the presenters' seats currently used on the set of Match Of The Day.

Every politician likes a comfortable seat – Theresa May chats to Derek Whitehouse at Boss Design in Dudley

NEWS IN BRIEF

Shoppers offered free health check

FREE blood pressure readings and lifestyle advice will be on offer to shoppers in Dudley.

As part of Rotary Stroke Awareness Week, the Dudley Stroke Association (DSA) will take over a shop in the town's Churchill Shopping Centre on May 17.

As part of the awareness campaign, free health checks including blood pressure readings and lifestyle advice will be offered to shoppers throughout the day.

They will also be on hand to offer information and advice to people in an effort to promote healthy lifestyles in the borough.

Taxis get green light for CCTV

A TAXI boss has spoken of his delight that cabs in Dudley have got permission to be kitted out with CCTV cameras.

Approval for the proposals, aimed at improving the safety of drivers and passengers, for Hackney carriages and private hire vehicles came at a meeting of the council's taxis committee on Thursday. Shaz Saleem, chairman of Dudley Private Hire and Taxi Association, said: "We are relieved that finally we have got it through. It has been a long time coming and there has been a lot of attacks."

'Allo 'Allo look who's reached 70

A THEATRE company will conclude its 70th anniversary season with a play version of a popular TV sitcom, 'Allo 'Allo.

Dudley Little Theatre will perform a version of 'Allo 'Allo – by Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft – at Netherton Arts Centre between May 16 and 19, a comedy set in occupied France during the Second World War.

Doors open at 7pm. Tickets cost £8 adults and £7 concessions.

To buy tickets, call (01384) 872583, 07954 424555 or go to dudleylittlethe atre.org website.

Mama Mia, what a show for Abba fans!

DANCING Queen, Knowing Me Knowing You and Mamma Mia will be among the hits when an Abba tribute band perform in the Black Country later this year.

Masters of the Scene –The Abba Show, will be staged at Brierley Hill Civic Hall on September 14. Adult tickets cost £17 with tickets for OAPs and under-16 scosting £13.50.

To buy visit www.bhillcivic.co.uk or call the box office on (01384) 573381.

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COUNTY NEWS

More attacks on health staff

ATTACKS on workers at two hospital trusts in the Black Country went up in a year but the overall number of assaults on staff in the region fell.

There were 290 attacks on workers at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, which runs Sandwell General Hospital and City Hospital in Birmingham, in 2016/17. This was up from 249 the year before.

And the number of attacks also rose at The Dudley Group NHS, which runs Russells Hall Hospital, from 132 to 139.

But at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, which runs Walsall Manor, the number dropped from 202 to 168.

Overseas artists at Weston Park

AN historic house will host an international painting show.

The International Watercolour Masters Exhibition will see 17 artists from across the globe featured from April 28 to May 31 in the Granary Gallery at Weston Park on the Staffordshire/Shropshire border.

Organised by Shropshire-based artist David Poxon, an elected member of the prestigious Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours, the show will be aired on the Society for All Artists painting and drawing channel SAA TV and features painters including Janine Gallizia, of Australia, and Dean Mitchell, from America.

Local history on internet project

AN archives group is looking to gather the history of Sedgley and Gornal together in one place on the web so it can be accessed by historians everywhere.

The Sedgley Archives Project will launch a website. A meeting will take place to discuss the project at Cafe Cappella in Gospel End Street, Sedgley, on May 28 at 11am. Martin Jones, project co-ordinator, said the aim was to enable people to upload items of interest about the area.

International dishes by catering students

ITALIAN and Asian dishes will be on the menu at themed evenings organised by catering students at Wolverhampton College.

Students studying for diplomas in professional cookery, food and beverage service will cook three-course meals at an Asian evening on May 3 and at an Italian evening on May 24. For reservations call 01902 821431.

Action taken to improve A&E rating

HOSPITAL bosses say vast improvements have been made at the urgent and emergency care at Russells Hall Hospital.

Diane Wake, chief executive of the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, has responded after a damning appraisal from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) concluded the trust needed to improve and raised concerns about A&E care.

Mrs Wake said they were disappointed by the findings of the CQC report but a Dudley improvement and comprehensive action plan had been put in place.

She said: "We are hoping to get to a point in the next few weeks where we can invite inspectors to come back into the trust. We feel we have put actions in place and we are much better. We are really disappointed by the findings of the CQC for the emergency department. We were inspected during one of the worst winters the NHS has seen but we are not using that as an excuse.

"Since the report we have recruited two emergency consultants and we have increased staff numbers in A&E department. There were concerns about how we manage sepsis and triage. We now have some of the best triage times in the Black Country. We have a dedicated sepsis team in the emergency department."

Chief executive Diane Wake

Hospital apologises after mother's death

By Danya Farrington and David Cosgrove

BOSSES of Russells Hall Hospital have apologised to a grieving husband after a mother-of-six was left waiting in the Dudley hospital's accident and emergency department for 12 hours before she later died from sepsis.

Natalie Billingham, 33, from Tipton, died in February after being admitted to A&E with suspected deep vein thrombosis.

Husband Stuart Billingham said the last time her six children saw their mother was when she got into the back of ambulance six weeks ago. He added: "My daughter made a joke saying you are not going to die are you mum and she said no of course not don't be silly."

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation trust has apologised after the death and launched an internal investigation.

Julian Hobbs, the medical director of the trust, said: "I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to Stuart Billingham on the tragic loss of his wife Natalie, and I sincerely apologise on behalf of the Trust.

"Any unexpected death in hospital is referred to the coroner, and we conduct our own internal investigation to see if any lessons can be learned. This case is subject to a full and thorough investigation, which I am personally leading. I have met with Stuart and will meet with him again once the investigation has concluded to share the findings with him."

Russells Hall Hospital – health watchdog inspectors expressed concern over A&E care

Rare

Mr Hobbs continued: "This is a very rare form of sepsis and difficult to diagnose, and we would typically only see three or four cases a year in the hospital.

"We took immediate action following Natalie's death. For example, our sepsis team support staff in A&E to spot the signs and take immediate and appropriate action. All our A&E staff have been retrained in sepsis management, and we audit sepsis four times a day so that we can intervene very quickly, if necessary."

Mr Billingham said his wife spent 12 hours in a cubicle before it was detected she had contracted sepsis in her foot. Her leg was amputated but her devastated family were later told the infection had spread too far and had caused organ failure.

Details of the tragedy came within hours of watchdog the Care Quality Commission (CQC) releasing its findings that Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust needs to improve, warning that urgent and emergency care is 'inadequate'.

The trust's overall 'requires improvement' rating is the same as in its previous inspection four years ago. But the CQC report downgraded rankings for effectiveness and leadership, which were good in 2014 but now need to improve.

Inspectors levelled the harshest criticism at the trust's urgent and emergency care.

The CQC's chief inspector of hospitals Professor Ted Baker said: "Our main concerns were with what we found in the urgent and emergency services, which we rated as inadequate overall. Triage processes were inconsistent and not exercised in line with the trust policy or national guidelines.

"Patients attending the emergency department did not always receive robust and sufficient assessment of their clinical presentation and condition. This posed a significant risk that life threatening conditions would not be identified and treated as quickly as they should have been."

The report said: "We found cases where patients had suffered serious harm because of lack of implementation and compliance with recognised systems."

Professor Baker said the trust also needs to improve staffing levels and described its governance as 'not robust'. But inspectors praised improvements to the trust's maternity care and community services, as well as stroke care which is rated one of the best in the West Midlands.

Shop sold teenagers fixes of laughing gas

A SHOP boss who supplied cannabis and nitrous oxide – laughing gas – to teenagers has been spared an immediate jail sentence.

Police found stashes of drugs at Liquor World run by Pubhinder Samra in Bromley Lane, Kingswinford.

The officers, accompanied by trading standards officers, discovered up to £6,500 worth of cannabis along with 28 sealed boxes, each containing two dozen individual charges of nitrous oxide, worth a total of £672.

At Wolverhampton Crown Court the 39-year-old proprietor admitted selling the two drugs but maintained none of his customers had been aged under 18.

Three days after the store swoop on May 16 officials returned to the scene and identified 168 used capsules of nitrous oxide strewn across an alleyway close to the shop, said Mr Paul Spratt, prosecuting.

Father-of-three Samra said he bought the capsules through the internet and sold them at a profit. Text messages on his mobile phone indicated that cannabis had been supplied from the shop since 2015. Almost 400 tablets of a type of Viagra were also found.

Mr Brian Dean, defending, said: "He has lost his shop through local authority regulations and has brought shame on himself and his family"

Samra, of Coton Road, Penn admitted possession of cannabis and a psychoactive substance, both with intent to supply, and possession of an unauthorised medicine. He was given a 20-month jail sentence suspended for two years with 150 hours unpaid work.

Murder charges – five in court

FIVE men accused of murdering Jaskaran Kang in Brierley Hill have appeared in Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Mr Kang, 24, from Handsworth, was found fatally stabbed in a flat in Stourbridge Road on January 6.

Reggie Salmon, 20, of Stourbridge Road, Dudley, Dontay Ellis, 18, of no fixed abode, and Joshua Campbell, 18, of King Edmond Street, Dudley, all appeared in court charged with Mr Kang's murder. Two 17-year-olds, who cannot be named for legal reasons, also appeared at court charged with his murder.

The five did not enter any pleas and spoke only to confirm their names, addresses and date of births at the hearing last week. They were remanded in custody and are due to appear at crown court on May 4.

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Closure of bank blow to elderly and traders

A BANKING giant is all set to close the doors at one of its Black Country branches for good as it prepares to axe more than 40 of its premises across the country.

Lloyds Banking Group will look to close its Brierley Hill site on the High Street as it sheds more than 1,200 jobs and plans to shut 49 of its branches in a nationwide shake-up.

A Dudley councillor has said the decision would mean 'another sad loss' for Brierley Hill and will spell difficult times for the elderly and traders who regularly use the branch.

Brierley Hill ward councillor Zafar Islam said: "It is going to be another loss because the traders can go and do their night cashing if you have a high street bank and not every person, particularly elderly people, have access to online banking.

"It will be very difficult for elderly citizens and the traders. It is a sad loss to the high street and I am quite certain that our senior citizens will be inconvenienced.

"I hope that Lloyds will consult their customers and they work out how they will be servicing through an alternative branch or branches.

"We councillors have no control over these things and I wish we did have some control.

"We are losing the post offices and losing the banks. It affects the community spirit."

Street name will not be changed

A STREET called Bell End is to keep its name despite a campaign for it to change, Sandwell Council said.

Residents of the street in Rowley Regis complained that it is one of the rudest road names in England and started a petition to change it in January. They claimed youngsters would be bullied at school and so called on Sandwell Council to rename it because they had become a 'laughing stock'. However the change.org petition attracted less than 200 signatures and has not been sent to the council.

A rival campaign – titled "Leave the Historic Name of Bell End Alone!" – received more than 4,800 supporters.

A council spokesman confirmed that Bell End would not be changing.

Spring fayre time

ST Andrew's Church in Sedgley holds its spring fayre on Saturday. The event at the Bilston Street church is 10am to noon and all proceeds go to church funds. Stalls include books, cakes, plants, clothes and bric-a-brac.

Takeaway failings led to £3k court bill

Rizwan's King's takeaway ceased trading

A TAKEAWAY boss has been landed with a court bill of more than £3,000 following a string of hygiene failings at his Brierley Hill premises.

King's takeaway boss Amir Rizwan, aged 38, had pleaded guilty to nine offences under food hygiene regulations at Wolverhampton Magistrates Court on April 5.

Dudley Council's environmental health inspectors gave King's takeaway, in High Street, Brierley Hill, a zero hygiene rating – the lowest possible.

Inspectors made a routine visit to the premises in May and found that floors, walls, ceilings, storage containers, microwaves and refrigerators were not kept clean and that equipment including a chopping board, frying baskets and refrigerators were damaged.

Staff were also not wearing clean protective clothing, were not trained and there was no soap or hand drying facilities provided at wash hand basins. Procedures to deal with pests and food safety management were inadequate.

The takeaway ceased trading in July 2017. Magistrates ordered fines totalling £2,250 and awarded costs of £1,000 and a victim surcharge of £30.

Martin Samuels, strategic director for people services at Dudley Council, said: "While we prefer to work with businesses to make sure they comply with the law, we will not hesitate to take legal action against those who don't.

"The vast majority of food outlets in the borough achieve a satisfactory hygiene rating of three or more. I would urge consumers to check out hygiene ratings online."

Parents fined for bad parking outside schools

NEARLY 300 parents have been fined after being caught by a spy car introduced to crack down on poor parking outside school gates.

Parents in the Dudley borough have paid out more than £8,400 to date – as 284 fines were dished out between September 2017, and March 2018.

The Dudley Council camera vehicle has been out on the streets looking for evidence of bad parking outside schools.

The vehicle was introduced at the start of the new school term in September last year in a bid to improve children's safety. The move followed complaints about problem parking.

The camera only starts rolling when the car has driven over yellow zig-zag lines.

Once the car leaves the area the camera stops rolling. Council officers have then been tasked with sifting through the footage to catch the perpetrators.

Lives

Alant Lunt, the council's strategic director for place, said illegal parking by some motorists was 'putting the lives of children at risk'.

The most fines were handed out on Hillcrest Road, Kates Hill, near to St Joseph's Primary School. Fines were also issued to parents parking in Church Road, in Coseley, outside Christ Church Primary School.

The spy car was also kept busy outside Netherton Primary School on Highbridge Road, Netherton, Blowers Green Primary School on Blowers Green Road, Dudley, and Castle High School on St James' Road.

Mr Lunt said: "We take safety around our schools extremely seriously, but the illegal parking by some motorists is putting the lives of children at risk.

"While, fortunately, the majority of drivers do park responsibly, there are still some who flout the law. The zig-zag lines are there for a reason, so children can see and be seen when going to and from school."

He added: "We will continue to use the CCTV vehicle on the streets around our schools, to help make them safer."

£1m centre opens after 10 years

Deputy Mayor of Dudley Councillor Alan Taylor with youngsters from the Yemeni association

MORE than 500 people attended the opening of a new £1 million community centre in Halesowen after ten years of fundraising by the Yemeni community.

Halesowen and Dudley Yemeni Community Association officially opened its Halesowen Cultural Centre in Highfield Lane last week. Residents, dignitaries and representatives from schools, colleges and churches attended the opening celebration.

Deputy Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Alan Taylor, officially cut the ribbon to open the centre.

The first stage of the centre's building work took place in 2013.

The association hope the centre will be used by the whole community in Halesowen.

Marwan Bakaili, chairman of the association, said "The centre will be used by the whole community, not just the association., bringing the whole community together."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Weekly parkrun from stadium

PEOPLE are being invited to take part in the national parkrun weekly sessions at the Dell Stadium.

The free 5k run takes place every Saturday at 9am, and the first run took place on Saturday.

The event starts and finishes at the Dell stadium and is part of the national parkrun social movement. It is hoped the run, which started at the Dell last year, will help those who want to get more physically active whilst attracting those who already run. There is no need to pre-book. New runners are asked to arrive by 8.45am. Go to Facebook @Dudley parkrun for further details.

Fan business is expanding in India

A BUSINESS based in Dudley has undergone an international expansion of its operations.

Elta Group, whose head office at Pensnett Trading Estate in Kingswinford, has announced a major expansion of its Asian operation, with the creation of Elta Fans India alongside its existing operation in Malaysia.

The company is an international leader in fans, air movement, filtration and distribution.

The move will see new offices open across the subcontinent in Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi.

Netherton folk get food for thought

A FREE 12-week diet and wellbeing course for Netherton residents is about to launch. Summat Ta Ate will share knowledge on nutrition and how to grow your own produce.

Hosted at the Netherton Park Activity Centre, the weekly project will start on May 3, taking place between 10.30am and noon.

Organiser Vicki Smith said: "This is not a course. It is a way of sharing what we already know about food, including Black Country fittle, with a bit of expert input."

Call 07952 563 725 for more.

Entries are invited for canalside exhibition

DUDLEY Canal and Tunnel Trust is holding its second open display of art and photography.

Entries are invited for the exhibition that will be held in the Waterside Gallery at The Portal, Birmingham New Road, from July 16 to September 16. It is open to all ages or abilities for art works in any kind of media as long as they can be wall mounted. The deadline is June 30. See dudleycanal trust.org.uk/open-exhibition-2018/

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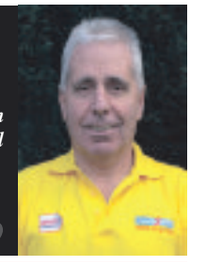
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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Plans for Royal not what doc ordered

THE £25 million scheme to redevelop Wolverhampton's Royal Hospital has received a lukewarm reception from Historic England, the quango set up to safeguard our architectural heritage.

The plans would see the Grade II listed building turned into 53 flats, but the main bone of contention is the proposal to knock down the former nurses' quarters, dating back to 1910.

Personally, I find the idea of turning this majestic building into a block of flats a bit underwhelming. With a little imagination, could it have become a leisure quarter, packed with stylish restaurants, bars and specialist boutiques?

On the other hand, the hospital has been empty for 20 years, and it would be a tragedy if it were to fall into further decline. Perhaps we should be pragmatic. Maybe the nurses' home could be moved to the Black Country Museum.

Historic England's concerns emerged the same week as the same group launched a debate on whether or not we should demolish Nelson's Column, even producing an excruciating graphic of the monument being smashed by a wrecking ball. So while Historic England is worried about a disused nurses' home it thinks there is a valid argument for knocking down one of Britain's most recognisable landmarks. Good to know it's got its finger on the pulse.

❒❒❒

WHILE politicians bicker like kids about the Windrush scandal, I fear the real point is getting lost.

The landing cards which would have provided the necessary evidence to prevent the debacle had been stored in a basement for decades. But then, in 2009, the UK Border Agency approved a "business case" to dispose of paper records. Says it all, doesn't It? Whenever a Whitehall pen-pusher starts talking about the "business case", alarms bells should ring. Bureaucrats just love playing the corporate executive don't they? One wonders how many of them would survive in the cut-and-thrust of the real business world.

No doubt the people who destroyed these vital files thought they were being frightfully modern, getting rid of all those musty old papers and placing their trust in shiny new computers. Buzzwords like "paperless office", "digital" and "streamlined" probably also figured.

And how are the authorities, always so impotent at preventing illegal immigration and deporting foreign criminals, so red-hot efficient at cracking down on peaceful middle-aged folk without the right papers?

Tories braced but local polls rarely reflect national mood

Jeremy Corbyn – local elections could provide him with a personal boost

Theresa May – could the outcome have a bearing on her political future?

Norah Batty – but not the same as the one who made a substantial legacy

May could cause problem for PM

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

THE Tories are already bracing themselves for some catastrophic results at the local elections. But, conversely, this poll could well provide the beleaguered Jeremy Corbyn with his biggest personal boost since he became leader of the Labour Party. Equally, dire results could lead to further mumbling among Tory MPs about the quality of Theresa May's leadership. But, be warned: Local authority polls rarely reflect with any accuracy at all the prevailing national mood of politics, whatever the victorious candidates may tell you after the event.These elections are invariably used by supporters of the prevailing Government to deliver a 'buck-up-your-ideas' kick in the pants, painful enough to give ministers a warning that they'd better do better - or else - without actually toppling them. So, before the first week of May is out, we are likely to see considerable tracts of the land on the political map changed from blue to red, as Labour seem likely to gain seat after seat, largely at the expense of the Tories.

ALTOGETHER a grim prospect for Mrs May. The outcome could have a bearing on her political future. And what of the Liberal Democrats? The party came close to being wiped off the face of Westminster in the past two years, but the gruff leader, Sir Vince Cable, sees sunlit uplands ahead. They will probably pick up a few seats here and there, but as for the massive revival he hopes for? Forget it.

ON our recent trip to Chester we came across some old houses in Abbey Street which had been restored, according to the plaque, 'with the help of a substantial legacy from Mrs Norah Batty'. Not the same one, apparently.

A REPORT recently claimed that even moderate drinking can shorten your life. But don't you just know that any day now there will be another report claiming that moderate drinking is good for you? Father Ted's famous words on religion - "That's the great thing about Catholicism – it's very vague and no-one knows what it's really all about" – apply just as well to medicine.

THAT great historian of our age, Philomena Cunk, made a good point in her series on the history of the United Britain of Great Kingdom (BBC2) concerning the development of computers. How very odd it is that the inventor of the first programmable computer or "difference engine," Charles Babbage (1791-1871) created the prototype of a device which, thanks to predictive texting 200 years later, would always spell his name as Cabbage.

YOU might think some things have been developed to the point where no further refinement is required. Not so. A reader describes a line of seemingly identical wheelbarrows at a garden centre. One was £20 cheaper than the others. "It's last year's model," explained the salesman.

GREAT news for motorists. As a result of a crackdown on bogus whiplash-injury claims, we are told "car-insurance premiums have fallen for the first time since 2014." This looks like one of those things that only affect other people. My premium for this year fell upwards, as always.

ANOTHER report reveals we are driving more old vehicles than ever. The number of cars over 13 years old has almost tripled in 20 years. The experts cite changes in car taxation and uncertainty about the future of diesel, but there is another crucial factor: rust. Since the early 2000s most cars have been rustproofed as never before. That's why you see so many 04 and 05-registered cars in great condition. By making cars last longer, car makers have undermined their own future.

CONSPIRACY-theory corner. If politicians feared that long-lasting cars might bankrupt the motor industry, how could they suddenly scrap lots of old cars to kick-start sales? They could tighten the MoT test. They could ignore millions of potholes. It's happening, folks.

I CELEBRATE St George's Day in my usual manner by not wearing a silly costume, not singing patriotic songs, not watching street dancers and not flying a flag. Why not? Because I'm English and those are things that foreigners do.

THE compressed-air machine at my local garage which used to charge 50p to pump up your tyres has been replaced by a new machine charging £1. Inflation, presumably.

TALKING POINT

Don't let children wander on their own

I STILL remember the horrifying footage of the two boys leading away toddler Jamie Bulger in 1993. Maybe parents these days are too young to remember, or memories fade, a bit like the rubber neckers who drive past a motorway crash and swear that they will never speed again. That pledge normally lasts for only the next few miles then, back to normal, foot on the pedal

For those who don't remember, Jamie's mum took her eyes off the two year-old for just a second when she was in a shop and two boys led him away. His body was found on a railway line. Two young boys were put behind bars. Lives shattered.

When I brought up my children and was out with them I always held on tightly to them, reins were popular and were the perfect solution when you had to take your eyes off them, even for just a minute. That does not seem to be the case these days. When I walked through the Mander Centre the other day I was horrified to see children walking paces behind their parents while the adults chatted with friends, seemingly oblivious to where their toddler was.

Anybody could have led them away. I nearly stopped to ask one little boy if he was lost, did he know where his mum or dad was, etc, but then he cornered into a shop where I presume his carer was. And these days you have to be so careful approaching young children in case people take it the wrong way. I am sure you know what I mean.

That was not an isolated occasion. Many times I have seen toddlers trailing along. Why is their hand not being held? A few moments of thoughtlessness could bring a lifetime of misery. Hold on to your children!

I was moaning about it to a colleague when she told me a similar incident of poor parenting. She had seen a man cycling with two small children on bikes following him. He went straight across a busy road, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the children would follow and maybe, by then, cars could be coming and it would not be safe to cross.

How would he have felt if one – or both – of them had been hit by a car? Surely the children should have been in front-where he could keep an eye on them.

I think it is great that children be involved in shopping trips, sports, etc, but remember they are only young and they have not got the experience to deal with some situations.

Children are precious – keep them close and keep them safe!

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Local bobbies only local if stationed locally

I read the article about eight police stations being closed over the next few years and within that article it stated there had been little or no opposition from the people of Dudley or Sandwell about the closures.

Did we have a choice and did the decision-makers care if the people of Dudley and Sandwell wanted to oppose the closures? I do not recall being asked my opinion about closures and I do not recall any surveys about closures.

When eventually all these stations have closed officers will have to travel further not only to get to their place of work but to get to the emergency and no doubt at some stage a life or lives will be lost.

But don't worry, we can dial 101, and then after waiting a fair length of time to report your crime, no officer will visit. The crime will then be filed unless, of course, you have CCTV of the incident or you have evidence the police can act upon.

With all this wonderful technology, we have less stations, less officers, crime detection the lowest its ever been, crime rising. Still those who are in the know tell us all these changes will not affect everyday policing and the public will not even notice the difference.

The biggest deterrent on the street to a criminal and or wrong-doer is the sight of a uniformed officer. Now with stations being closed this can and will mean even fewer officers to be available in the area.

Local bobbies can only be local if stationed locally. Those who hold the purse strings don't care about everyday policing.

PETE LOWE
Brierley Hill

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL
dudley.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

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Red paint will not slow traffic

I despair of getting any kind of coherent response from Sedgley councillors, candidates or Dudley traffic department concerning the Gospel End Street/Vicar Street accident blackspot.

By incomprehensibly placing a large white mound of asphalt outside Cafe Cappella, which most cars swerve to avoid, they've made the junction even more dangerous than it was.

Having failed to do their homework, they now find they cannot alter the angle of egress from Gospel End Street due to underground piping, which may be a good thing as it wouldn't have made a ha'porth of difference.

If they think painting the road red and replacing old signs with new will impress us, they take the population of Sedgley for mugs.

The obvious solution – to install road bumps on the approach to the junction – is ignored.

MARTIN JONES
Sedgley

Putin pride is the key to removing Assad

THE use of bombs and missiles will be futile in Syria as the only person powerful enough to topple Assad is Vladimir Putin. Therefore, the only way to get to Assad is through Putin. There may be a way of doing this without fear of retaliation. We know that Putin is fanatical about sport, showcasing Russia's sporting prowess at every opportunity. The first step would be to persuade as many footballing nations as possible to withdraw from the World Cup. Or even to cancel it altogether. Then, persuade as many countries as possible to ban Russia and Syria from all international athletic events until Assad is brought to justice. Putin would put his Russian pride before ties with Assad.

MICHAEL CLIFF
Wall Heath

Etiquette fit for a burglary

I'VE taken a little time out to list some hints on what to do when confronting burglars.

1: Suggest they might like tea or a coffee.

2: Always be good mannered.

3: If asked where that cash you've put away is kept, show decorum as you open the front of the piano.

4: In the event of a knife being flashed in your face, you could suggest it may need sharpening and that you have a tool for that.

5: If you are about to be bound and gagged, direct the intruder to the clean towel drawer.

Okay, it's understandable when in your 70s you get a bit crotchety and forget the niceties and maybe skewer the assailant but honestly, it's really not in the spirit of things is it?

Ask any copper and he'll confirm what I say.

ALAN M ETHERIDGE
Dudley

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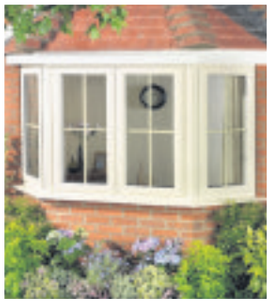

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Jake Cooper (Cons)
Bill McComish (Green)

Brierley Hill
Phil Atkins (Cons)
John Dyer (Democrats and Veterans)
Gordon Elcock (Green)
Zaraf Islam (Lab)*
Terry Thorn (UKIP)

Brockmoor and Pensnett
Clare Bramall (Lib Dem)
Rich Colley (UKIP)
Judy Foster (Lab)*
Sue Greenaway (Cons)

Castle and Priory
Martin Day (UKIP)
Alan Finch (Lab)*
Ryan Priest (Lib Dem)
Richard Tasker (Cons)

Coseley East - vacant
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Karen Jones (UKIP)
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Cradley and Wollescote
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Mitchell Bolton (UKIP)
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Mitch Barlow (Green)
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Parmjit Sahota (Lab)

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Ray Burston (Cons)
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James Walker (Lab)

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Delesh Patel (UKIP)
John Payne (Green)
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Lye and Stourbridge North
Naz Ahmed (Green)
Euan Dunn (UKIP)
Pete Lowe (Lab)*
Thomas Ruff (Cons)

Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's
Martin Berrington (Cons)
Dean Horton (UKIP)
Elaine Taylor (Lab)*
Alex Wright (Green)

Norton
Christopher Bramall (Lib Dem)
Colin Elcock (Cons)*
Monika Narad (Lab)
David Powell (UKIP)

Pedmore and Stourbridge East
Jon Dean (Lab)
Simon Hanson (Lib Dem)
Angus Lees (Cons)*
Glen Wilson (UKIP)

Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood
Chris Barnett (Lab)*
Chris Blake (Cons)
Lee Taylor (Lib Dem)
Angela Walker (UKIP)

Sedgley
Bill Etheridge (UKIP)*
Mushtaq Hussain (Lab)
Shaun Keasey (Cons)
Elaine Sheppard (Lib Dem)

St James's
Khurshid Ahmed (Lab)*
Malcolm Davis (Cons)
Mick Forsyth (UKIP)
Benjamin France (Lib Dem)

St Thomas's
Jonathan Elliott (Cons)
Francis Sheppard (Green)
Steve Waltho (Lab)*
Phil Wimlett (UKIP)

Upper Gornal and Woodsetton
Lynette Corfield (Lab)
Chris Neale (Cons)
Dean Perks (UKIP)*
Kelly Richards (Green)

Wollaston and Stourbridge Town
Nicholas Barlow (Cons)*
Harriet Foster (Lab)
Andi Mohr (Green)

Wordsley
Kevin Billingham (Lab)
Paul Brothwood (UKIP)*
Donna Harley (Cons)
David Sheppard (Lib Dem)

VOTERS across the borough will head to the polls next week for a crucial round of local elections.

The balance of power in Dudley is on a knife edge, with the Conservatives currently controlling the authority thanks to an alliance with UKIP.

The town is considered a key marginal, and although the reds and the blues will again jostle for leadership, it is the purple party that held sway following last year's elections.

On May 3 a total of 24 seats are up for grabs – including five of UKIP's six seats on the council – in a poll that could see control change hands yet again.

Labour currently hold 35 seats, the Tories have 28, UKIP has six, and there is one independent councillor.

The Tories will defend seven seats to Labour's 10.

Two seats are vacant. Voters will head to the polls in Coseley East, where UKIP's Star Anderton stood down earlier this year, and Halesowen South, the seat vacated by Conservative Nick Gregory.

The leaders of the two main parties will go before voters.

Tory council leader Councillor Patrick Harley defends his Kingswinford South seat, and Labour group leader Pete Lowe is up for Lye and Stourbridge North.

The election also sees former Mayor and Labour council leader David Sparks step down after four decades in local government.

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Terror chief sacked after secret papers are stolen from his car

A SENIOR counter-terrorism officer has been sacked after secret documents were stolen from his car has been sacked but he will keep his pension.

West Midlands Assistant Chief Constable Marcus Beale's pension became active just two weeks before the decision to dismiss him. He will receive a tax free lump sum thought to be around £215,000. The sacking decision by Chief Constable Dave Thompson was on recommendation of a disciplinary panel, which found him guilty of gross misconduct.

ACC Beale, aged 54, had left the classified documents, which included minutes from a high-level counter-terror meeting, in a briefcase in his car. He parked the vehicle at a train station while on a weekend away and at a supermarket while shopping. The theft was discovered by Mr Beale at a service station, five days after being given the documents.

Marcus Beale – gross misconduct

Serious

Mr Thompson said: "The conduct in this case is a serious criminal conviction for improperly caring for documents. I agree (with disciplinary panel decision) that the misconduct in this case is serious and is very likely to undermine public confidence in policing."

Mr Beale, who was to retire on April 28, pleaded guilty last year to an offence under the Official Secrets Act, and was fined £3,500.

Mr Beale's counsel, John Beggs QC, had argued his dismissal would have been 'merely symbolic' in light of imminent retirement. Mr Beggs said: "Mr Beale's response to this ghastly realisation (that documents had been stolen) was swift, professional, selfless, and imbued with the characteristic that runs through him like Brighton rock – honesty and integrity."

He read testimonies on Mr Beale's character from high-profile names including national lead for counter-terror policing, Mark Rowley, and Birmingham City Council leader Ian Ward. He added: "Having regard to this officer's particular contribution to policing, the chief constable would be entitled to conclude that dismissal is not necessary for the maintenance of public confidence in policing."

But Mr Thompson dismissed him, following the recommendation of the disciplinary panel, after finding him guilty of gross misconduct.

Mr Beale was fined £3,500 after pleading guilty to failing to safeguard information under the Official Secrets Act at magistrates court.

Law firm in three Peaky climb for charity

Colleagues from Higgs & Sons have dubbed themselves 'The Peaky Climbers' and will tackle the three peaks challenge

AN intrepid group of legal professionals will be lacing up their boots to tackle the National Three Peaks Challenge to raise funds for a Dudley mental health charity. Ten colleagues from Brierley Hill law firm Higgs & Sons have dubbed themselves 'The Peaky Climbers' – in a nod to popular BBC drama Peaky Blinders – and will raise funds for Dudley Mind, the firm's charity of the year.

They will climb Ben Nevis, Scafell and Snowdon in 24 hours on July 6/7. Wearing peaked caps, they are John Heaton, Jamie Partington, Richard Griffiths, Craig Thomas, Katie Willems, Rachael Watkins, Jordan Hollingsworth, Laura Hackett, Jenny Bridgewater and Jade Williamson.

The team hope to raise £3,500 for Dudley Mind, a charity which aims to improve and promote recovery and wellbeing for people in the Dudley borough affected by poor mental health.

Ms Willems, a solicitor in the corporate team, said: "I have always wanted to do the National Three Peaks Challenge and when I suggested we do something for Dudley Mind I was overwhelmed by the support from colleagues. There are lawyers, non-lawyers and partners taking par, with Nick Taylor, our head of corporate, volunteering to drive the minibus."

To support them, visit localgiving.org/fundraising/peakyclimbers

'Despicable' crooks in charity con

SUSPECTED crooks have been posing as fundraisers for one of the Black Country's most-loved charities.

A warning has been issued after the would-be fraudsters knocked on doors claiming to be raising money for the Beacon Centre for the Blind.

Police are now investigating after 'despicable' reports of people going door-to-door in aid of the charity who tried to encourage people to start direct debits.

Beacon Centre bosses have said they do not fundraise on the doorstep and have urged homeowners to report any suspected fraud to West Midlands Police.

The charity, which has bases in Sedgley and Stourbridge, supports visually impaired people across the Black Country.

Sedgley ward councillor Michael Evans branded the alleged con artists as 'disgraceful' and warned residents – particularly vulnerable and elderly people – need to be on their guard.

Councillor Evans said: "I think this kind of behaviour is totally unacceptable. A lot of people would not hesitate to help the Beacon Centre for the Blind which is a fantastic and much-loved charity.

"The Beacon Centre has been going for such a long time and does tremendous work – for somebody to use its name for these purposes is disgraceful. If the police catch these people then they should throw the book at them – it is despicable."

A Beacon Centre spokesman said: "We have had reports of fake door-to-door fundraisers who are asking people to sign up to direct debits to support the Beacon Centre.

"Beacon does not fundraise door-to-door. Please report any suspected fraudulent activity to the police."

Charity chiefs have now passed details over to police investigators. Anyone with information should call police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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Strewth! Soldiers face tough test in the Outback

ARMY reservists from the Black Country have been sweating it out on gruelling exercises nearly 10,000 miles away in Australia.

Troops – including five from B Squadron Royal Yeomanry, known as the Black Country Cavalry – have been put through their paces in soaring temperatures.

As part of Exercise Morelandcourt, the reservists from Vicar Street HQ in Dudley, were working together with Australia's 2nd Cavalry Regiment and the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment on a 'highly testing exercise' in Queensland – in temperatures of up to 28°C (82.4°F).

Reservists of the Royal Yeomanry and the Australian 12/16 Hunter River Lancers, have been training in the light cavalry dismounted scout role as part of the operation. It featured M1 Abrams tanks, ASLAV armoured vehicles and PMV Bushmaster troop transporters.

Corporal Matt Smith, from Dudley, said: "This exercise has been the pinnacle of many weeks of training and preparation, and has been one of the most exhilarating and rewarding things that I have done in my military career so far."

Around 40 troops from the UK took part in the manouevres.

The drills featured both tanks and armoured vehicles during the exercise under a blazing sun in Queensland

Vet staff in pledge to support wildlife

STAFF from a veterinarian practice have pledged their support to wildlife throughout the year.

Clent Hills Vets, which has staff at Hagley, Bromsgrove and Redditch, has chosen Worcestershire Wildlife Trust as their Charity of the Year after a vote.

As well as joining the county-based charity as a corporate member, staff will also be helping to raise funds for wildlife as well as getting mucky on practical conservation sessions.

Mike Perry, Head of Resources for Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, said: "We're absolutely thrilled that Clent Hills Vets have chosen to support us this year. It's fantastic that all their staff are keen to do what they can to help wildlife in Worcestershire."

Three members of staff, Amy Holloway, Rebekka Fiorani and Helen Beesley, have already joined one of the Trust's volunteer groups when they visited Penorchard Meadows, near Hagley, for the day.

Police told to remove homeless posters

POLICE posters warning people against giving money to the homeless have been scrapped after being slammed by the crime commissioner.

The posters, put up in Stourbridge, Dudley and Sedgley, should never have been published says West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson.

The 300 posters, introduced in February as part of a campaign, carry the headline 'Your Kindness Could Kill' and show a crime scene outline of a body with coins.

The poster stated that giving money could actually keep people on the streets, claiming that 'in most cases' it would help them buy drugs.

The poster was also circulated via social media and as part of the force's neighbourhood alerts emails.

The homeless poster

Error

Mr Jamieson said: "I did not and do not approve of the message.

"I've discussed (it) with West Midlands Police. They're been taken down after going up in error, they do not represent West Midlands Police's position either.

"They are insensitive, crass and shouldn't have been produced in the first place."

A West Midlands Police spokesman confirmed the posters had been taken down but said they had helped 'reduce the issue', adding: "Rough sleeping and homelessness is a national problem, here in the West Midlands we work alongside partner agencies to try to tackle this issue.

"A small number of posters were produced, following artwork used elsewhere in the country, in a bid to raise awareness and, in some areas, this has helped reduce the issue.

"We are aware that the poster may be deemed insensitive and as a result we are removing them from public places."

The posters were criticised by Vi Wood, who runs Leslie's Care Packages for the Homeless, helping people in the Black Country.

The 58-year-old, who set up the charity in response to her own experience being homeless following the death of her husband Les, said: "The message on the posters was definitely too strong. If you have 10 homeless people and two take drugs, the others who use the money to buy things like a coffee lose out. I'm pleased it has been dropped."

Mrs Wood, of Wollaston, goes on weekly patrols, providing clothing and food to between 10 and 20 people.

Free cruise to New York

A LUCKY holidaymaker will be setting off on a transatlantic cruise for free after being named the winner of a competition by The Midcounties Co-operative Travel.

David Wayman from Wall Heath booked a transatlantic cruise holiday with Cunard, which sails from Southampton to New York, at the Co-operative Travel branch in the town. David won back every penny he paid for the trip, when he will be visiting his son who lives in the USA.

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Community bounce in for new hub

PEOPLE came together to paint a new trampoline park and community hub which is due to open soon.

Former mayor Councillor Steve Waltho MBE was among those who lent a hand to paint the Leap centre in Birmingham Road, Dudley.

It will offer trampolines, a safe haven for young people, a games room, a healthy eating restaurant and courses for young people.

Chris Campbell, aged 49, managing director of Leap, said: "Childhood obesity is on the rise and childhood diabetes is something we need to address. Because we're a trampoline park and a hub there is a not-for-profit aspect of it. We want young people to be the best they can be."

Manford set for a sell-out show

EARLIER this week only a handful of tickets were left for comedian Jason Manford's new show, Muddle Class, at Dudley Town Hall tomorrow night (Friday) but the popular Salford comic has added another date at the venue.

Tickets are now on sale for Manford's return to Dudley on October 3, see boroughhalls.co.uk for details or call (01384) 812812. Tickets are also available from Dudley Council Plus in Castle Street.

FOCUS ON DUDLEY TOWN CENTRE

Eagle-eyed visitors can join painted rock craze at zoo

GET ready to rock – the hidden painted-rock craze has hit Dudley Zoo.

It's goodbye fidget spinners as the new fad, which involves decorating a rock and hiding it in a public place for someone to find, has already gripped some of the attraction's visitors.

Staff at the zoo have also jumped on board and been placing some of their own designs around the grounds.

By Dayna Farrington

The zoo's in-house graphic designer, Rachel Lane, has painted two stones with a rabbit and reptile design – and roped in her husband, Stewart, into painting one with an owl.

Hidden

All three have now been hidden around Dudley Zoo – for visitors to find.

Staff are asking those who find the rocks to either re-hide them or keep it – but they are encouraging finders to use the hashtag #dudleyzoorocks and tag them on social media with a photo of their find.

Mrs Lane said: "It really was therapeutic painting the stones and they have become a great talking point in the zoo offices.

"I have already been out on site to hide them in places our visitors can access and hope they will make people smile if and when they are discovered."

The craze has hit woodlands, riversides and pathways across the UK. To get involved people just need a few rocks, paints or permanent markers and a bit of creativity. People paint designs and often write positive quotes on the rocks before hiding them.

Meanwhile, eight stunning scarlet macaws have winged their way to the zoo and moved into the newly-built £30,000 aviary.

The South American scarlet macaws came to the Castle Hill attraction from Paradise Park in Hayle, Cornwall. Zoo manager Matt Lewis said: "These birds are such a vibrant colour and will definitely make themselves heard.

The zoo's in-house graphic designer Rachel Lane with the three painted rocks hidden at the Castle Hill attraction

Homes and shops plan at Derann's

THE former base of an independent electronics and cine store could be turned into two shops and 13 apartments.

The building on Dudley High Street was previously occupied by Derann Audio Visual, a family-run business famous as the worlds biggest distributor of Super 8 mm film during the 1970s

A proposal has been submitted to Dudley Council to turn the empty building into two retail units on the ground floor, plus nine one-bedroom and four two-bedroom apartments on the upper floors and at the rear.

A document with the application suggests the shops would be welcomed by local residents.

Delay warning as road closed

A STRETCH of road is expected to remain closed between certain hours for almost a month as works take place, with delays expected.

Part of the Priory Road in Dudley is closed as the council carry out carriageway resurfacing works between The Broadway and St Edmunds Close.

The route saw works start on April 11 and are expected to remain until May 10 between the hours of 9.30am and 3.30pm.

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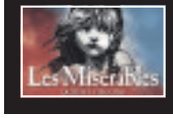

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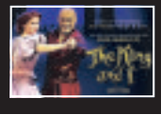

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Aim for Merry Hill to rival Trafford Centre

SHOPPING centre owner intu aims to bring Merry Hill up to equal its biggest site, Manchester's Trafford Centre.

The company has already revealed plans to spend more than £100 million on the shopping centre at Brierley Hill.

Plans include a new cinema as part of an expanded leisure and dining area. And Next is converting the former Sainsbury supermarket into one of the chain's biggest UK stores.

Now intu has revealed its aim to put Merry Hill on a par with one of the biggest and most successful shopping centre's in the country.

The proposed intu Merry Hill leisure development with new Odeon cinema

Value

The company said: "At intu Merry Hill in the West Midlands, a centre we took full ownership of in 2016, we have a great opportunity to generate value with a leisure extension, similar to that at intu Lakeside, to ensure the centre has a compelling mix of retail, catering and leisure on a par with our flagship asset outside Manchester, intu Trafford Centre."

It came as the property giant revealed rising customer numbers and its success signing up a string of major shopping brands for its centres up and down the country.

The bullish trading statement was seen as part of intu's efforts to quell any doubts about its proposed £3.4 billion tie-up with Bullring and Grand Central owner Hammerson.

The threat to the deal from gatecrashers Klepierre appeared to subside after the French group abandoned its rival bid for Hammerson, but Hammerson later dropped a bombshell by announcing it was recommending its shareholders reject the intu merger.

The aim is for Merry Hill, top, to rival the Trafford Centre, above

Meanwhile intu says it has taken a £3.9 million hit in recent months from the collapse of major retail chains such as Toys R Us and Maplin, as well as restructuring by the likes of New Look and Prezzo.

But its trading update for the year so far was focused on record demand from retail chains and a strong operating performance.

Chief executive David Fischel said: "Our prime shopping centres produced a strong first quarter with lettings at increased rents, high occupancy and footfall exceeding the comparable period last year.

He added that Footfall had significantly and consistently outperformed the ShopperTrak national retail benchmark over the last five years.

Dementia, infidelity and lots of laughs

David Baddiel performing his one-man show about this loving but chaotic family life, which was staged in Dudley last

IF you thought this show at Dudley Town Hall was all about David Baddiel getting deep and serious about his upbringing and his father's dementia, think again. It was an absolute rip-roaring performance about life, death and, most importantly, the crazy stuff that happens in between.

People of a certain generation will remember Baddiel from the 90s classic Fantasy Football, which he co-hosted with Black Country-born Frank Skinner, with whom he penned one of the greatest ever England songs, Three Lions. But he is so much more than that. The Mary Whitehouse Experience, Newman and Baddiel In Pieces,

DAVID BADDIEL MY FAMILY: NOT THE SITCOM

and Baddiel and Skinner Unplanned are some of just his TV exploits.

Add to that his seven books and the hit indie film The Infidel, he is one of the most talented and, arguably, most underrated writers of his generation. His latest effort is stand-up show My Family: Not The Sitcom, which was performed in Dudley Town Hall last week. Sad, joyous, traumatic but, most of all, hilarious, Baddiel had the audience gripped from the off.

His father, Colin, who has been diagnosed with Pick's Dementia. Part of his condition is he now swears constantly, can be aggressive and, on occasion, comes across as extremely rude – but, as the host puts it, he was always like that anyway.

The show's real star is Baddiel's late mother, Sarah. Blunt and uncompromising, but also extremely loving, she also happened to enjoy a 20-year affair, right under the noses of her family, without ever actually confirming it. Far from being annoyed, Baddiel explained it was the affair that made his family what it was.

JAMES DRIVER-FISHER

Snooker ace among the honours at mayor's ball

A WORLD class snooker champion, a youth campaigner and a renowned charity were among the winners in the Mayor's Civic Awards.

The Mayor Councillor Dave Tyler presented exclusive hand-crafted glassware to the winners at his annual charity ball on Friday evening.

More than 300 people attended the annual ball, sponsored by XL Windows 2000, at the Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill, which helped raise thousands of pounds for charity.

During the evening the Mayor presented awards in seven categories all supported by local businesses.

The Mayor's Pride of Dudley Award went to Mary Stevens Hospice who got the most votes when the award was put to the public online. Mental health campaigner Jon Mansell, from Dudley, and The Retreat Café in Dudley were runners-up.

Swimming

Dudley-born snooker star Reanne Evans picked up the Duncan Edwards award for sport, sponsored by Nordic Timber Group, for her achievements around the globe. She won the WLBSA Ladies World Snooker Championships 10 times.

Bernard Simkins won the runner-up prize for more than 40 years of service to Stourbridge Swimming Club.

Eve O'Connor won the William Shenstone award for environment, sponsored by Jessup Brothers, after helping Halesowen to the gold award in the Halesowen in Bloom competition for the past four years.

Hurst Green Park friends group chair Carol Hackett, from Halesowen, received the runner-up award after helping bring in more than £10,000 of investment to the area and organising a series of clean-ups.

Snooker ace Reanne Evans won the Duncan Edwards award for sport

The Thomas Attwood award for education, sponsored by the School Travel Company, went to Maureen Smith, from Brierley Hill, who has dedicated the past 50 years of her life to Old Park Special School in a range of roles from cleaner to carer. Rhys Khan, from Stourbridge, won the runner-up award for his work with Dudley Youth Council.

The famous Teddy Grays company won the Mike Holder award for business for promoting the borough all over the world with their historic, global brand. The runner-up award went to Lyn Kimpton who has helped build Stourbridge-based Klick Business Solutions into a thriving business.

The Cedric Hardwicke award for arts, sponsored by the GMB Union, went to Gurcharan Bhujhangy, from Halesowen, who has raised thousands of pounds for charity by organising events. Michael Peters took home the runner-up award for establishing a not-for-profit theatre company for young people.

Captain Andy Peters of the Army Reserve Centre in Dudley won the Frank Foley award, sponsored by the Dodd Group, for community spirit after spending years promoting the work of the armed forces and building links with communities across the borough.

Hospital

Eight-year-old Imogen Shuttleworth, from Stourbridge, won the runner-up award for her charity fundraising efforts raising thousands of pounds for Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Councillor Dave Tyler, Mayor of Dudley, said: "These are amazing people with so many incredible stories to tell. They go about their day helping people and making this borough better, and this is about giving them the recognition they deserve."

The James Bond themed ball as attended by a host of businesses, civic dignitaries and community group representatives.

The money raised from the night will be split between the Mayor's three charities – Dudley Mind, YMCA Black Country Group and Dudley Alzheimer's Society.

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Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, April 26, 2018

Interior design on a salesroom shoestring

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips

WE'RE always saying that it can cost a good deal less to furnish a home with vintage pieces than with shiney new contemporary ones – and it seems our sale-goers are in agreement!

One bidder at this month's auction bought a beautiful chair and sofa, both in excellent condition and of good quality, for just £170 and was delighted as she had a limited budget and had been rather depressed at the cost of similar new items.

It really isn't that difficult to comprehend, all you have to do is compare prices to see that 'shopping' in the saleroom can yield some real bargains.

And you don't have to slavishly follow any 'set patterns' in terms of interior design, mix and match styles and colours to create a unique and personal look.

There really are some amazing vintage pieces of furniture being sold for very reasonable prices just now.

Armchairs, sofas, tables, bookcases, wardrobes – you name it and you can usually buy it at auction for a good deal less than you would pay for something similar in a large retail outlet.

Of course, some vintage items will show signs of a little wear and tear but this shouldn't deter you and if you buy something in need of restoration then it won't be much of an issue – get some expert advice if you need it and use a professional upholsterer for soft furnishings.

If you are furnishing a new home - or revamping an existing one - it can be a lot of fun browsing a saleroom for 'unexpected' treasures like a beautiful old clock, a vintage lamp or a pretty Edwardian day bed.

You need to think outside the furniture box and be creative, set yourself a budget, make up a wish-list and head off to a saleroom viewing day!

Check for condition before you decide to bid - and size, remember modern homes tend to have relatively small doorways – and be pleasantly surprised at the bargains you acquire!

* The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables will take place at the Mill Street saleroom, Low Town, Bridgnorth on Tuesday, June 5, from 10.30am.

Viewing is during the weekend and on the Monday prior to the sale and catalogues are available from the saleroom or online at www.perryandphillips.co.uk. Newcomers to the auction should arrive in plenty of time to register and be allocated a bidding number and bids may be made (by prior arrangement) over the phone or left with the auctioneer.

*** Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm.**
*** Video previews of the sale are now available on our website, www.perryandphillips.co.uk.**

Regrets over trades as gold's popularity returns

Gold is now back in vogue

DID you take your unworn gold jewellery to the high street gold shop a few years ago?

Silver coloured metals were the trend and the unpopular traditional yellow gold "worth it's weight" and we traded it in in our thousands.

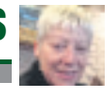
Whatever we were saving for helped along by the price of this precious metal and hordes of retailers opened to help us sell it.

For many years now silver coloured metals have been a popular choice for jewellery, more wedding and engagement rings in silver, white gold, platinum, titanium and steel at the expense of the warm coloured metal our ancestors preferred.

Gold is available in varying colours by mixing other metals with 24 carat gold. White gold is mixed with palladium or silver, adding copper creates a soft pink but blue, purple and black can be created by adding patinas or oxides.

24 carat is pure gold with no other metals. Lower carat contains less gold – 18 carat gold contains 75 per cent pure gold and 25 per cent other metals, often copper or silver. For example, 9 carat yellow gold has 37.5 per cent pure gold, 42.5 per cent silver and 20 per cent copper.

STYLE FOCUS



with Janet Timmis

Gold has emotional, cultural and financial value and is used in jewellery, technology and traded by banks and investors. It was the first metal known to us, it is easy to work with and neither corrodes nor tarnishes.

Ancient civilizations used it as decoration and it has always been associated with wealth and royalty.

It has been accepted as money all over the world, the first coins being produced as early as 700BC.

Did you know? It is rarer to find a one-ounce nugget of gold than a 5 carat diamond. One ounce of gold can be stretched to a length of 50 miles or hammered into a nine metre square sheet and at least half of all mined gold goes to produce jewellery.

Gold nanoparticles are used in home pregnancy test kits to ensure accurate results and every smartphone contains gold to help keep your data safely stored.

In the last couple of years rose gold has been the newest jewellery trend being used as a popular colour on everything from nail varnish to phone covers, I could see though the way preferences were changing and how we would soon see a re-emergence of traditional gold.

I have just watched the new Pandora advert on the television and the glossy advertising pages in the magazines are awash with the soft warm tones of traditional yellow gold.

I've already heard friends commenting on their regret of selling the family jewellery because it was no longer a popular style or colour and the money went towards the trendiest of scatter cushions for the newly decorated bedroom.

Hopefully we have learned from our mistakes!

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Older red wines can be decanted

Buying wine should be a happy experience

Buff or bluff? How to get the best from a bottle

Cork or screwtop – does it matter?

WE may be a nation of wine drinkers, but we don't always know how to get the best out of a bottle.

By Sam Wylie-Harris

Whether we're at home or away, the ritual of opening a bottle is as much about having a good time as it is about the wine.

But sometimes, there can be a nagging thought in the back of our minds. Is this wine ready to drink? Am I serving it in the right glass? Do I know where it's from?

So, to enhance your wine pleasure and answer any pressing questions from the grapevine, here are a few that crop up time and time again...

1. How can I buy a bottle of wine without feeling intimidated?

We've all felt the fear... walking into a wine shop and not quite knowing where to begin. For starters, buying wine should be a happy experience, so make sure you choose a good wine shop (not too stuffy, not too large and impersonal) where the staff are approachable, knowledgeable and hold regular wine tastings. Otherwise, you can get to grips with the wine world by buying online, or joining a wine club.

2. Screw cap or cork?

Firstly, there's nothing wrong with a screw cap. They've shed their shady past of being associated with cheaper wines and keep wine fresh and reliable every time. Winemakers, especially in New Zealand and Australia, favour them.

Corks are susceptible to cork taint. However, many winemakers believe they're essential for ageing, because full-bodied wines benefit from a little oxygen.

3. How do I taste wine like a pro?

Look, swirl, smell, sip. Sounds easy enough. Pour the wine, tilt the glass and note the colour and clarity of the wine. Swirl the glass to release the aromas and think about the fruits at the fore, which could be citrus or tropical in a white, or bright cherry and strawberry fruit in a red.

Take a sip, taste the wine and think about the texture and length. Did you like it? Did it leave you looking forward to the next sip (or glass)? Make a mental note and the more you taste, the more you'll learn.

4. Does vintage matter and which one should I buy?

Generally speaking, the current vintage for white wine represents grapes that were harvested one to three years ago, depending on the style of wine. For red wines, the current vintage is usually from one to four years ago. When it comes to fine wines such as Bordeaux, a good vintage will be reflected in the price and there may be several vintages (check the year to see if it's ready to drink) available at any one time.

5. How can I understand a wine label?

New World producers (from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, South America, USA) don't shy away from putting their name and grape variety on the label, which indicates the style of the wine. So if you're a pinotphile (lover of pinot noir), you can easily hunt down a Chilean, Californian or Kiwi pinot. However, Old World wines (from Europe) go by region or village, which can be very confusing if you don't know your Sancerre (sauvignon blanc), from your Chablis (chardonnay).

6. Which glass should I choose?

Most wine critics prefer a larger glass, so a generous red wine vessel is best for whites and reds. For champagne or sparkling wine, a glass with a larger rim diameter will enable the aromas to be released, which doesn't happen with a traditional, narrow flute.

7. When should a wine be decanted?

Usually, a wine is decanted when it needs to be separated from the sediment, which is generally only present in older red wines – say 10 years plus.

Characters were a delight to work with, says Chris

Sad farewell to Hayley in Coronation Street

The Dillons, played by Adam James and Emilia Fox

Comedy icon Johnny Vegas takes the starring role

Elaine Paige plays the part of Neil's fun-loving mother Mercy Hackett

Corrie writer streets ahead with new

HE'S written some of the most memorable episodes of Coronation Street – from Schmichael the great dane's hot tub incident, to the death of Hayley Cropper.

And now South Staffordshire father-of-three Chris Fewtrell has branched out to co-writing his very own series, starring comedy icon Johnny Vegas and West End legend Elaine Page.

The new comedy show, entitled Home From Home, started last week on BBC One. It tells the tale of working class family man Neil Hackett, played by Johnny, who has finally achieved a life-long dream of buying a lodge in the Lake District with his wife Fiona, played by Niky Wardley.

Neil is delighted with his buy at Lake View Holiday Park until he meets the neighbours Robert Dillon, portrayed by Doctor Foster's Adam James, and his wife Penny, played by Emilia Fox from Silent Witness.

Elaine Paige plays the part of Neil's fun-loving mother Mercy Hackett.

"Neil sabotages his dreams. The guy across the way seems effortlessly superior. For him, it all seems to go right," said Chris, who lives in Codsall. "But the real tragedy is that if Neil looked at what he has, he'd realise how rich he actually is. He has great kids, a loving wife… If he could just stop obsessing over others, he'd have a great time.

"Home From Home is a show for any dad who has felt like he is falling short – especially in comparison to any other dads. There's a touch of National Lampoon thrown in there, in so much as there's this dad who is desperate for everything to go right and for his family to have a good time. But reality always rains on his parade.

"That's what inspired the title too. When Neil packs things into his car, he doesn't just leave his worries at home – he takes it all with him; they just come out in different ways."

Chris, who has worked on titles including The Bill, Byker Grove, Peak Practice, and Rosemary and Thyme, says that while it may sound like a 'cliché', the whole Home From Home cast was 'absolutely fantastic' to work with – particularly Johnny.

"He's the nicest, most genuine, warmest guy you'll ever meet," added 48-year-old Chris. "After a while, following the pilot, we actually tried to tailor the character of Neil to Johnny. No-one does frustration and righteous anarchy like he does. Neil will be patient to a degree, but when he goes – or thinks he's being slighted – he goes to the extremes that no normal person would.

"Comedically speaking, we looked at characters like Basil Fawlty for example; someone who beats their car with a tree branch. We were looking at characters with no safety gauge."

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FRI 4TH MAY - HIGHWAY
SAT 5TH MAY - BLUE CONDITION
FRI 11TH MAY - SQUEAKY PETE LIQUOR AND POKER BAND
SAT 12TH MAY - GOT THE T SHIRT
FRI 18TH MAY - BLACK COUNTRY PIRATES AKA THREE BLING MICE
SAT 19TH MAY - THUNDER DAZE

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Could it be magic? We really hope so

It's one of the most popular new musicals in Britain. The Band tells the story of what it's like to be in a boy band and was written by Tim Firth in conjunction with Take That stars, Gary Barlow, Howard Donald, Mark Owen, Robbie Williams.

The show opened at Manchester Opera House in September to critical and public acclaim. It comes to Birmingham Hippodrome from May 1 to 12.

For five 16 year-old friends in 1992, 'the band' is everything. Twenty five years on, we are reunited with the same group of friends, now 40-something women, as they try once more to fulfil their dream of meeting their heroes.

Tim is delighted it's proven so popular. "The band came about because Gary and I have known each other since pre-Take That. He went and did Take That and we kept in touch and then halfway through, when they first split up, he asked what I thought about doing a musical. I'd done Our House, the Madness musical, which I enjoyed because the lyrics and story worked. There was a story hidden in there.

"At first, I wasn't sure that was the case with Take That. The story and songs didn't match up, so we ditched it.

"And then they got reborn and this whole other catalogue of work emerged. It was bigger, longer and more mature. We were in this unique position of having this longevity with a gap.

"So the idea came up of doing it again and I still said 'no'. But gradually that changed and the story became about a female character, not the band. The words 'Take That' are never mentioned in the show."

SKETCH

Tim is used to writing hits. He grew up in Warrington before moving to study at Cambridge University, where his contemporaries included David Baddiel and Sam Mendes.

"David's one of my closest friends and he was the year above me. I wrote all the music for his shows and then my own. What Cambridge does is makes you write. Writers learn about writing by writing.

"We're not novelists. If you are writing for production or for sketch or comedy you have to get it out in front of people. The great thing about all universities, not just Cambridge, is that.

"But Cambridge also has a vibrant lineage, which encourages it. And it's so bl**dy big; it's like a small city in terms of colleges so it's very fertile in terms of cross pollination.

"You are meeting people from different backgrounds. I went to a comprehensive school in Warrington and ended up mixing with private school kids and people whose parents were in the business. The truth is, you have to brave it out and realise that you have three years to really use that time. Cambridge was very much a springboard."

One of Tim's biggest hits was Calendar Girls. The play was adapted by Tim from his own film and found favour with audiences across the UK during its 2008/09 tour, and in the process broke the all time British box office record for a play and also continued to sell out during its West End residency.

In 2010, the hit comedy embarked on a UK country wide tour, one of the largest ever for a play.

Tim says: "Calendar Girls is a very unusual piece. It touched people. A large percentage of the audience would have been touched by the brushes with the illness. What is fascinating about it for me is that the most moving part was the second act where people claw their way back to hope. The hope and the challenging of despair with wit, which is what the comedy was all about, really connects. We all know what it's like on stage to watch people suffer and die. That's been there for thousands of years.

"But the resilience of the human spirit and that fight to find light and comedy and repair relationships is the more moving. The audience are responding to hope, rather than despair. The tragedy is very quick in the first act. The rest is a gradual ascent into light and optimism and hope.

"When the idea came up for Calendar Girls, there were ideas of middle aged women taking their clothes off for a calendar, which is funny. But it won't get you through a full evening. We sensed there was something else behind it. It's the defiance and the ascent into light. It applies to all people, including those not stricken with illness. We've all suffered failures, like the break-up of a marriage, and then you have to decide how to react. What made the first one potent was that it was born out of tragedy."

Tim has strong connections with the West Midlands, having participated in courses run by the Arvon Foundation, which is based at the former home of Don't Look Back In Anger playwrite, John Osborne, in Shropshire.

"My association with them began when I spent the most important week of time at uni at the Lumb Bank one. I turned up because it was run by Willy Russell, who'd just written Blood Brothers. I wanted to write musicals but we ended up having to write dialogue and I found that I enjoyed it and people laughed.

"When I went to university I went slightly with that wind under my wings. University is full of actors. I also met Sam Mendes there, who directed some of my stuff. I was able to learn very quickly in public what my failings and strengths were."

Andy Richardson

Fab five – The Band features the music of Take That

The words 'Take That' are never mentioned in the show

● **For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.**

Manic Street Preachers

Preaching resistance with the Manics' 13th album

WELSH rockers Manic Street Preachers hit a lucky 13 with their latest album Resistance is Futile and a tour which brings them to Arena Birmingham tomorrow night (Friday).

Of their first album in four years, the band's Nicky Wire says: "The main themes of Resistance Is Futile are memory and loss; forgotten history; confused reality and art as a hiding place and inspiration. It's obsessively melodic, in many ways referencing both the naive energy of Generation Terrorists and the orchestral sweep of Everything Must Go.

"After delay and difficulties getting started, the record has come together really quickly over the last few months through a surge of creativity and some old school hard work."

Following the musical departures of 2013's largely acoustic Rewind the Film and the electronics of 2014's Futurology, Resistance Is Futile heralds a return to a classic Manics sound described by the band as "widescreen melancholia".

The songs on the album are the first recorded in the band's new Door to the River studio (near Newport). While not overly fixated by the current news cycle, the album does obliquely confront subjects such as predatory tech companies and the impact of the 2016 referendum on personal relationships.

Support at the city centre venue will be from The Wirral's psychedelic pop/rockers The Coral, who released their eighth album, Distance Inbetween, in 2016.

The heat is on for Cheryl and co

HORMONES and hilarity are the order of the day when a marvellously middle-aged celebrity cast will be featured in a popular musical which is returning to the region.

Following previous sell out UK and Irish Tours, and a triumphant return to Wolverhampton last month, Menopause the Musical will be at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre at 4pm and 7.30pm on Saturday. The show will also be staged at The Place in Telford on May 18 at 5pm and 8pm and at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre at 4pm and 8pm on May 24.

Armed with memory loss one-liners and innuendo-laden versions of pop classics, the tour has been filling venues around the UK.

Starring Cheryl Fergison, pictured, who was EastEnders favourite Heather Trott, Maureen Nolan, Casualty's Rebecca Wheatley and Hilary O'Neil, from ITV Copy Cats, the hysterical musical has entertained and inspired women across the world since 2001.

This hilarious celebration of women and 'The Change', is an all-singing, all-dancing comedy bringing together four women at a department store sale, who on first appearance have nothing in common. However, the sale of a black lace bra soon stimulates comical female heart-to-hearts on hot flushes, night sweats, chocolate binges and plastic surgery.

Meanwhile, Cheryl Fergison has also been announced as one of the cast for Amanda Whittington's Ladies Day, a comedy about a memorable day at the races, being staged at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from July 13 to 28.

Her co-stars in this eagerly-awaited in-house production by the Lichfield Street theatre will include Deena Payne, Viv from Emmerdale.

Plan B heaven sent for Birmingham gig

It's been six years since Plan B, the alias for Ben Drew, pictured, last hit the road for a solo UK tour. Now he's back to preview the release of his new album, Heaven Before Hell Breaks Loose, which follows on May 4. The star will headline Birmingham's O2 Academy tomorrow night (Friday) for a sell-out show.

Heaven Before Hell Breaks Loose is the rapper's first new album in eight years. His last record, The Defamation of Strickland Banks, hit number one and sold more than a million copies.

Explore and survive a frozen landscape

Games don't have to be all-action to enthral, as shown by Impact Winter, the new survival game from Bandai Namco/Mojo Bones.

The player takes a God-like view from above as you help Jacob and his team of survivors as they try to survive in a post-apocalypse frozen landscape. The group are holed up in a derelict church and need to venture into the gloomy wintery landscape to find resources to keep them going until the promised rescue mission arrives. You will need wits and strategy, and keep one eye on your health meter, to make it but have help from a robot pal named Ako-Light. Trudging through the snow may not be all that appealing after the winter we just had but Impact Winter is an engaging and atmospheric PC game now also launched for PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

Commercial Feature

CANAL SIDE RETREAT

Situated in an idyllic pocket of Stourbridge by the canal, our traditional, unspoilt 19th century public house welcomes families, musicians, boaters, walkers, cyclists and fishermen alike.

Amicably known as the 'Sammy', the pub is a popular setting equally for passer-bys and the locals. Boasting the most fearsome landlady in 1840, and her rival 'She who must be obeyed' in the form of Sheila, the present licensee, the team will ensure that you enjoy your time with us.

If you're just looking for a bite to eat, we have a selection of bar snacks available which can be washed down with a beer, wine, cider or spirit of your choice in a beautiful location. Remember us if you're hosting a party, we have a function room ready and waiting. Just ask us for further information regarding catering and disco hire; we have plenty of contacts to help get the party in full swing!

So, whether you're looking for somewhere to meet with family and friends, have a bite to eat, enjoy some live music or challenge yourself with a classic pub quiz, the Samson and Lion has something to offer everyone.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

SATURDAY'S TV APRIL 28

CHOICE

Robert Downey Jr

Iron Man
(Channel 4, 9pm)
Arms manufacturer Tony Stark is taken hostage by a terrorist group and realises the weapons his company build have been falling into the wrong hands. Using his engineering skills to construct a hi-tech armoured suit, he manages to escape and then puts the technology to good use in the fight against evil around the world. Superhero adventure, starring Robert Downey Jr, Jeff Bridges, Gwyneth Paltrow and Terrence Howard. With Shaun Toub, Jon Favreau, Faran Tahir and Clark Gregg.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Hairy Bikers' Asian Adventure. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The afternoon session on day eight at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield. **4.30** Final Score. **5.20** A Question of Sport. (R) **5.50** Celebrity Mastermind. (R)

6.20 Ready or Not. Crumpet the talking dog surprises a passer-by in Stratford, Quiztina quizzes the good people of Blackpool, and Sam and Mark are back in their Gameshow Lift.

6.50 BBC News.

7.00 Regional Programme.

7.10 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present a star-studded version of the general knowledge quiz, with Denise Van Outen and Lydia Bright, Michelle Ackerley and Arthur Smith, Ann Widdecombe and Tyger Drew-Honey, and singing duo Foster & Allen.

8.00 Who Dares Wins. Nick Knowles presents the game show in which two pairs of complete strangers team up, each battling to outdo the other by listing as much as they know about a given subject.

8.40 Casualty. Ethan is in danger of crossing a line with Leigh-Anne, while Robyn throws away a present from Glen after he questions whether she is fit to be in work. Bea wakes up in an alley calling for help, which comes in the form of nightclub bouncer Johnny, who initially refuses treatment for his own nasty cut.

9.30 Mrs Brown's Boys. Newlyweds Dermot and Maria argue over whether they should buy their own home, while Grandad hopes to witness his own funeral. (R)

10.00 BBC News; Weather.

10.20 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Bournemouth v Southampton at the Vitality Stadium and Swansea City v Chelsea at the Liberty Stadium.

11.45 The Button. Game show set simultaneously in the houses of five UK families, whose members compete to win challenges determined by The Button in the comfort of their living rooms. (R)

12.15 Film: City Slickers II: The Legend of Curly's Gold. (1994)

BBC2

6.15 David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** The Dengineers. **8.00** Absolute Genius: Monster Builds. **8.30** Beyond Bionic. **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. **12.00** Wanted Down Under. (R) **12.45** Flipping Profit. (R) **1.30** Britain's Biggest Warship. (R) **2.30** Top of the Shop with Tom Kerridge. (R) **3.30** Top of the Shop with Tom Kerridge. (R) **4.30** Live Snooker: The World Championship. **5.30** Britain in Bloom. (R)

6.00 Antiques Road Trip. Arusha Irvine and Philip Serrell's challenge concludes in Gloucestershire as they take a Victorian marmalade cutter and a 16th-century bronze thimble to auction. (R)

7.00 Live Snooker: The World Championship. Hazel Irvine introduces coverage of the final session on day eight at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, where one second-round match concludes and another gets under way.

8.00 The Forest. Mark Bonnar narrates a documentary following the people who live and work in Galloway Forest Park, where 600,000 tons of timber is produced every year.

8.30 Dad's Army. Classic comedy with the Home Guard. (R)

9.00 Civilisations on Your Doorstep. In a companion programme to Civilisations, classicist Mary Beard goes in search of extraordinary works of art from all over the world that can be seen in Britain.

10.00 Performance Live: Akala Presents The Ruins of Empires. A performance piece by Akala, using animation and emerging technology.

10.30 The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story. Andrew watches as the news of the murder of Gianni Versace breaks across the world's media, and he is named publicly as his killer. Last in the series. (R)

11.25 Snooker: The World Championship. Highlights of the concluding session on day eight at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, where one second-round match was set to come to a finish. Presented by Rob Walker.

12.15 Snooker: World Championship Extra. **2.15** Civilisations. (R)

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Star Wars Freemaker Adventures. (R) **7.25** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.30** Teen Titans Go! (R) **7.45** Adventure Time. (R) **8.00** Thunderbirds Are Go. **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Zoe Ball on Saturday. **9.25** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20 Film:** Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang. (2010) **1.20** ITV News; Weather. **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Sandown. Coverage of today's meetings at Sandown Park, Haydock Park and Leicester. **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase. (R)

6.00 ITV News; Weather.

6.15 Regional Programme; Weather.

6.30 Ninja Warrior UK. Celebrity contestants including McFly's Harry Judd and Paralympian Dan Powell test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge, hosted by Ben Shephard, Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara. Those who make it to the end of the adrenaline-fuelled mission face one final task – scaling the heights of a tower named Mount Midoriyama – as they battle it out for the title of Ninja Warrior UK.

7.30 Harry Hill's Alien Fun Capsule. The comedian hosts the madcap panel show, with Johnny Vegas, Jimmy Osmond, Sue Johnston and Samantha Giles tasked with saving planet Earth from any potential alien invasion.

8.00 Britain's Got Talent. Ant and Dec host the third heat of the nationwide talent search, which sees a wide variety of acts, from comedians to contortionists, singers to spoon players, compete for the chance to win a huge cash prize and a coveted slot at the Royal Variety Performance.

9.20 The Keith & Paddy Picture Show. Keith Lemon and Paddy McGuinness recreate Pretty Woman.

9.50 ITV News; Weather.

10.05 Film: Overboard. (1987) A spoilt heiress suffers amnesia after falling off her yacht and is taken in by a carpenter, who claims to be her husband. Comedy, starring Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell.

12.15 Change Your Tune. (R) **1.10** Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 Motor Sport: Caterham. **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** The King of Queens. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.55** Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix Practice 3 Live. **12.25** F1 Meets Jackie Stewart. (R) **12.55** Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix Qualifying Live. Coverage from the Baku City Circuit (Start-time 2.00pm). **3.45** Car SOS. (R) **4.45** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. (R) **5.30** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R)

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 The Restoration Man: Best Builds. George Clarke looks back at four memorable industrial conversions from the programme. A couple in rural Rothbury, Northumberland, battled through ill health to restore the 17th-century Thrum Mill, while two novices took on more than they bargained for with a pair of listed barns in Herefordshire. A free-spirited maverick worked single-handedly to restore an idyllic lochside ice house in Argyll and Bute, and in Hertfordshire, a young family toiled to find the perfect design solution to breathe new life into a Victorian pumping station. (R)

8.00 Britain's Most Historic Towns. Alice Roberts tells the story of Tudor England by studying the history of Norwich, learning the harsh reality of religious intolerance and experiencing humiliating Tudor justice.

9.00 Film: Iron Man. (2008) Arms manufacturer Tony Stark is taken hostage by a terrorist group and realises the weapons his company build have been falling into the wrong hands. Using his engineering skills to construct a hi-tech armoured suit, he manages to escape and then puts the technology to good use in the fight against evil around the world. Superhero adventure, starring Robert Downey Jr.

11.25 Film: The Maze Runner. (2014) A teen with no memory in an isolated community must find his way through a deadly labyrinth in search of freedom. Sci-fi adventure, with Dylan O'Brien.

1.30 Undercover Boss USA. (R) **2.20** Hollyoaks. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.30** The Gadget Show. (R) **11.25** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.25** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.25** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.30** Live Aviva Premiership Rugby Union. Gloucester v Bath (Kick-off 3.00pm). **5.15** World's Scariest Animal Attacks. (R)

6.00 World's Deadliest Weather: Caught on Camera. A tornado tears a mile-wide path through the city of Moore in Oklahoma, and flash floods in Glenridding in Cumbria push tonnes of rubble into the village. (R)

7.00 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! Agents Paul and Steve face a moral dilemma in south London, when they find out the tenant they have been instructed to evict is on his way to a funeral. Elsewhere, Stewart and Victor chase £1,000 from a debtor who has defaulted on his payment plan, but they are subjected to abuse and the police are called to a driveway standoff. Plus, two agents try to recover £1,600 worth of goods from the owner of an entertainment company after a wedding day dispute, and in west London, a landlady is owned £9,000 in rent arrears by a young mother. (R)

8.00 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! Agents Stewart and Elmore face the most challenging eviction of their careers, while Brian and Del chase £2,000 worth of debt owed by a business based in Kent. (R)

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Wolverhampton Wanderers v Sheffield Wednesday and Hull City v Cardiff City.

10.00 Football on 5: Goal Rush. Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including Wigan Athletic v AFC Wimbledon and Yeovil Town v Mansfield Town.

10.30 Film: Dances with Wolves. (1990) A soldier alone at a remote outpost is adopted into a Sioux tribe during the American Civil War. Oscar-winning Western, directed by and starring Kevin Costner. With Mary McDonnell.

1.35 SuperCasino. **3.10** The Yorkshire Vet. (R) **4.00** Jack the Ripper: Missing Evidence. (R) **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Wildlife SOS. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Atlantic: The Wildest Ocean on Earth **8.00** Wild Burma: Nature's Lost Kingdom **9.00** Salamander: Blood Diamonds **10.35** Land of the Lost Wolves **11.35** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.05** Jeff Beck: Still on the Run **1.35** Atlantic: The Wildest Ocean on Earth **2.35** Wild Burma: Nature's Lost Kingdom **3.35** Close

ITV2
11.45 Britain's Got More Talent **12.45** Ninja Warrior UK **1.45 Film:** Yogi Bear (2010) **2.45** FYI Daily **2.50 Film:** Yogi Bear (2010) **3.25 Film:** The Mummy Returns (2001) **4.25** FYI Daily **4.30 Film:** The Mummy Returns (2001) **5.45 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) **6.45** FYI Daily **6.50 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) **9.20** Britain's Got More Talent **10.20** Celebrity Juice **11.05** Family Guy **12.30** American Dad! **1.25** The Cleveland Show **1.55** Plebs **2.25** CelebAbility **3.00** Teleshopping

ITV3
12.55 Agatha Christie's Marple **3.00 Film:** Carry On Screaming (1966) **5.00** Midsomer Murders **11.05** Vera **1.05** Law & Order: UK **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4
12.50 Film: Chisum (1970) **1.55** FYI Daily **2.00 Film:** Chisum (1970) **3.05** Merry Christmas Mr Bean **3.35** Mr Bean **4.10 Film:** Every Which Way But Loose (1978) **5.10** FYI Daily **5.15 Film:** Every Which Way But Loose (1978) **6.25 Film:** Moonraker (1979) **7.25** FYI Daily **7.30 Film:** Moonraker (1979) **9.00 Film:** Safe House (2012) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** Safe House (2012) **11.20 Film:** American Gangster (2007) **12.20** FYI Daily **12.25 Film:** American Gangster (2007) **2.25** Tommy Cooper **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.00 The Goldbergs **1.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.00** Young Sheldon **2.30** The Big Bang Theory **8.00 Film:** Snow White & the Huntsman (2012) **10.30** The Inbetweeners: Fan Favourites **1.15** Gogglebox **2.20** Tattoo Fixers **3.15** Rude Tube **4.05** How I Met Your Mother **4.50** Rude(ish) Tube

Film4
11.00 Thunderbirds Are Go! (1966) **1.00** The Book of Life (2014) **2.50** Multiplicity (1996) **5.05** Enemy Mine (1985) **7.10** Chronicle (2012) **8.50** Beast Interview Special **9.00** Non-Stop (2014) **11.05** Horns (2013) **1.25** The Raven (2012) **3.40** Close

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Departing Saturday 26 May
From Halesowen & Stourbridge
Price Includes...
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Departing Sunday 23 Sep
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SUNDAY'S TV APRIL 29

CHOICE

Bob Hawkins

Britain's Biggest Warship (BBC2, 8pm)
The crew of HMS Queen Elizabeth completes the vessel's sea trials, testing an innovative new firefighting system for the first time and marking the 100th anniversary of a plane being successfully landed on a moving ship. The carrier returns to Portsmouth, which will be its home port for the next 50 years, while the pilots of its fighter jets go to the US for additional training. Last in the series.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Rip Off Britain: Food. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **2.00** The Truth About Obesity. (R) **3.00** Britain's Fat Fight with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. (R) **4.00** Points of View. **4.15** Songs of Praise. **4.50** Pointless Celebrities. (R) **5.35** BBC News. **5.50** Regional Programme.

6.00 The Big Painting Challenge. Mariella Frostrup and Rev Richard Coles present the semi-final from Glasgow, where the contestants must demonstrate their skill at capturing movement by painting athletes in action. For the first challenge, they must depict an endurance runner and a cyclist, while the final test involves gymnast's floor and beam routines.

7.00 Countryfile. Matt Baker is in Cornwall, where he meets a blind man walking from Land's End to John O'Groats to raise money for charity, planning to catch the first day of spring at each point of his journey. Ellie Harrison reports on a project to bring back beavers to the county's riverbanks, Steve Brown goes looking for seasonal marine life, and Tom Heap investigates high rates of suicides among farmers.

8.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce hosts the show from Floors Castle in south-east Scotland, and discovers the story of an American heiress who donated a collection of fine art to the estate.

9.00 The Woman in White. Laura is forced into marriage to Sir Percival in spite of her love for Walter, and soon realises that her fiance has a dark side.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League action, featuring Manchester United v Arsenal at Old Trafford and West Ham United v Manchester City at the London Stadium.

11.30 The Women's Football Show. A look at the biggest issues in the women's game, focusing on matters at both club and international level.

12.10 Weather for the Week Ahead.
12.15 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. (R) **6.35** Gardeners' World. (R) **7.35** Countryfile. (R) **8.30** The Beechgrove Garden. **9.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **10.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. **11.00** Triathlon World Series: Bermuda. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The afternoon session on day nine at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield.

6.00 Super Fast Falcon. The peregrine falcon is the fastest animal on earth, able to reach speeds of more than 200mph. But what does it take to be a high-speed record-breaker? This documentary follows a young family of falcons as they grow up in Chicago. It also meets renowned bird handler Lloyd Buck as he puts his peregrines to the test, using state-of-the-art technology. He also trains one young peregrine for the ultimate challenge of speed and agility, racing an Olympic skier in the Swiss Alps. (R)

7.00 Live Snooker: The World Championship. Jason Mohammad introduces coverage of the final session on day nine at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, where two second-round matches continue.

8.00 Britain's Biggest Warship. The crew of HMS Queen Elizabeth completes the sea trials and returns to Portsmouth, while the pilots of the fighter jets go to the US for additional training. Last in the series.

9.00 My Year with the Tribe. Will makes his final two trips to Korowai territory and attends a traditional festival. On his return to the village, he finds himself in a dangerous situation. Last in the series.

10.00 Famalam. Comedy sketch show.

10.20 Josh Widdicombe: What Do I Do Now. A recorded performance of the comedian's show at the Hammersmith Apollo, in which he vents his frustration at everything from an overflowing shower to his contactless debit card. (R)

11.20 Snooker: The World Championship. The concluding session on day nine at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, where two second-round matches continued. Presented by Jason Mohammad.

12.10 Snooker: World Championship Extra.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **7.25** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.30** Teen Titans Go! (R) **7.45** Adventure Time. (R) **8.00** The Haunted Hathaways. (R) **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Zoe Ball on Sunday. **9.25** Love Your Garden. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** Best Walks with a View with Julia Bradbury. (R) **11.30** ITV News; Weather. **11.40** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **12.55** Britain's Got More Talent. (R) **1.55** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **2.25** Ninja Warrior UK. (R) **3.30** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs – India. (R) **4.00** The Real Camilla: HRH the Duchess of Cornwall. (R) **5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.00 Harry Hill's Alien Fun Capsule. The comedian hosts the madcap panel show, with Johnny Vegas, Jimmy Osmond, Sue Johnston and Samantha Giles tasked with saving planet Earth from any potential alien invasion. (R)

6.30 ITV News; Weather.

6.45 Regional Programme; Weather.

7.00 Little Big Shots. Dawn French meets the UK's youngest town crier, a group of Spanish flamenco dancers, a US string trio and a six-year-old who wants to be a surgeon.

8.00 The Durrells. Henry Miller comes to stay with the family, and stirs up tension among Louisa and her children with his strange behaviour and the controversial content of his books.

9.00 Invitation to a Royal Wedding. Trevor McDonald and Julie Etchingham present a look ahead to the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, and go behind the scenes on previous royal ceremonies.

10.00 ITV News; Weather.

10.20 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.15 Last Laugh in Vegas. The nine British entertainers have spent more than a week rehearsing for their dream gig, but they question whether the show should go on after a tragedy hits Las Vegas. (R)

12.10 This Time Next Year. (R) **1.00** Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK. **3.50** Take on the Twisters. (R) **4.40** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.05 The King of Queens. (R) **6.30** The King of Queens. (R) **6.55** Motor Sport: FIA World Rallycross Championship. **7.55** Eat the Week. (R) **9.00** Sunday Brunch. **12.00** Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix Live Build Up. A preview of the fourth round of the season. **12.40** Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix Live. The fourth round of the season (Start-time 1.10pm). **3.55** Formula 1 Azerbaijan Grand Prix Live Reaction. A review of the fourth round of the season. **4.30** Car SOS. (R) **5.30** Grand Designs. (R)

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Escape to the Chateau. Dick Strawbridge and Angel Adoree continue their renovation of a French chateau, 18 months after the end of the first series. So far, only nine rooms have been renovated and many areas of the 12-acre estate have yet to be looked at – but the project is going to have to start paying for itself soon. They make plans to host weddings on the grounds, while looking ahead to keeping livestock and growing their own crops. Dick takes steps to generate solar power during a hot summer, and turns an old oil tank into a pig roaster. (R)

8.00 The Crystal Maze. Richard Ayoade guides a team from a school for deaf people through the Aztec, Medieval, Industrial and Future zones, tackling a range of skill, mystery, physical and mental challenges on their way to the Crystal Dome. Last in the series.

9.00 Homeland. Saul's mission is given the greenlight. The clock is ticking on the Keane administration. Espionage drama, starring Claire Danes, Mandy Patinkin and Elizabeth Marvel.

10.05 Gogglebox. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)

11.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. Team captains Sean Lock and Jon Richardson are joined by David Baddiel and Trevor Noah. Joey Essex is in Dictionary Corner and Alex Horne and the Horne Section help Rachel Riley. (R)

12.00 Film: The Voices. (2014) Comedy crime thriller, starring Ryan Reynolds.
2.00 Film: Happy Bhag Jayegi. (2016) Premiere. Romantic comedy, starring Diana Penty. **4.10** Come Dine Champion of Champions. (R) **5.05** Building the Dream. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wissper. (R) **6.20** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.25** The Secret Life of Puppies. (R) **6.30** Mofy. (R) **6.35** Simon. (R) **6.40** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.45** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.00** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.10** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.20** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.30** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **7.55** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.10** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.30** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.55** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.10** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.25** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.35** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.40** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.15** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.10** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.40** FIA Formula E. **12.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.40 Film:** Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole. (2010) Animated fantasy, with the voice of Jim Sturgess. **3.30 Film:** Zookeeper. (2011) Comedy, starring Kevin James. **4.30** 5 News Update. **4.35 Film:** Zookeeper. (2011) Concluded. **5.25 Film:** Ace Ventura: Pet Detective. (1994) Comedy, starring Jim Carrey.

7.00 Biggest Dog in the World. Documentary meeting three households with Great Danes. Essex woman Claire, whose canine companion is so huge, potential boyfriends do a runner once they see him, a US family who had to supersize their lives to accommodate Rocko, and Welshwoman Julie, who paid a high price for her 20-year canine obsession when her marriage ended. The film also reveals the pros and cons of owning giant dogs, including the crippling costs of more than £12,000 a year, constant care for a pet that cannot be left for longer than four hours at a time and extreme domestic destruction. (R)

8.00 Before They Were Stars. Part two of two. Dale Winton revisits another selection of archive clips that immortalised popular celebrities' first, ill-advised forays into the cut-throat world of showbusiness. (R)

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Greatest TV Talent Show Moments. Memorable moments from TV talent shows, including Ann Widdecombe on Strictly Come Dancing to Susan Boyle's unexpected success.

12.00 Greatest Ever Celebrity Wind-Ups. (R) **1.00** SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **4.00** World's Most Pampered Pets. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Mountain **9.00** Battle of Jutland: The Navy's Bloodiest Day **10.00** Easter Island: Mysteries of a Lost World **11.30** Timeshift: A Day at the Zoo **12.30** How to Be Bohemian with Victoria Coren Mitchell **1.30** Mountain **2.30** Battle of Jutland: The Navy's Bloodiest Day **3.30** Close

ITV2
12.05 Film: Babe (1995) **1.05** FYI Daily **1.10 Film:** Babe (1995) **1.55 Film:** Twister (1996) **2.55** FYI Daily **3.00 Film:** Twister (1996) **4.05** Britain's Got Talent **5.25** Britain's Got More Talent **6.25 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **7.25** FYI Daily **7.30 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30 Film:** Jack and Jill (2011) **1.35** FYI Daily **1.40 Film:** Jack and Jill (2011) **2.20** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.30 Inspector Morse **4.00** Lewis **6.00 Film:** Agatha Christie's Sparkling Cyanide (2003) **8.00** Les Dawson: An Audience With That Never Was **9.00** The Murder of Stephen Lawrence **11.10 Film:** The Constant Gardener (2005) **1.40** Blue Murder **3.15** Road to Avonlea **4.50** George and Mildred **5.45** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4
6.20 Pawn Stars **6.50 Film:** Every Which Way But Loose (1978) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00 Film:** Every Which Way But Loose (1978) **9.00 Film:** Heartbreak Ridge (1986) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** Heartbreak Ridge (1986) **11.40 Film:** Maximum Conviction (2012) **12.40** FYI Daily **12.45 Film:** Maximum Conviction (2012) **1.50** It's Not Rocket Science **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.35 Film: Animals United (2010) **1.30** The Goldbergs **2.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.00** Young Sheldon **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.00 Film:** Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters (2013) **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** The Inbetweeners: Fan Favourites **12.55** The Big Bang Theory **1.55** Rude Tube

Film4
11.00 The Hound of the Baskervilles (1959) **1.00** Magic in the Water (1995) **3.00** Anastasia (1997) **4.50** Never Been Kissed (1999) **6.55** Home Alone (1990) **9.00** Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation (2015) **11.35** Filth (2013) **1.30** 52 Tuesdays (2013) **3.50** Close

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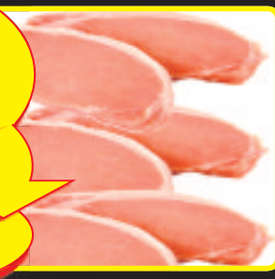

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Deadly Dance Mom, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A woman takes extreme measures to ensure her daughter wins a scholarship to an exclusive dance academy, but the mother of the victim of her scheme will do whatever necessary to protect her own daughter from her rival's evil plan. Thriller, starring Christina Cox and Beverley Mitchell. (2017)

TUESDAY
Running for Her Life, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Amateur triathlete Alison Wynn hires a controversial trainer who uses hypnotherapy as a training technique and begins to improve physically, but the return of repressed memories takes a toll on her family life. Alison's daughter soon grows concerned and works to save her mother from the psychologically-manipulative coach. (2016)

WEDNESDAY
A Daughter's Nightmare, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A grieving widow finds a shoulder to cry on in the form of a charming male nurse, but when her health subsequently begins to fail, her daughter embarks on a dangerous search for the truth about her illness. Drama, starring Emily Osment. (2013)

No Strings Attached, Friday, BBC1, 11.50pm

THURSDAY
Murder She Baked: A Deadly Recipe, Channel 5, 3.15pm
When a sheriff is killed during election time in small-town Minnesota, local bakery owner Hannah sets out to solve the crime and clear the name of her brother-in-law, who has been falsely accused of the murder. Mystery, starring Alison Sweeney, Cameron Mathison and Barbara Niven. (2016)

FRIDAY
No Strings Attached, BBC1, 11.50pm
Two childhood friends run into each other and end up sleeping together. Neither of them is interested in committing to a relationship, so they agree to keep things purely sexual. But despite their best efforts, they start to fall in love. Romantic comedy, starring Natalie Portman, Ashton Kutcher, Kevin Kline, Cary Elwes, Greta Gerwig, Lake Bell, Olivia Thirlby and Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges. (2011)

PICK OF THE WEEK

Eight more singletons begin their journey to find love

For many nine-to-five urbanites caught in the rat race, countryside living is just a pipe dream. But could falling in love be the key to making that dream a reality?

In this new series, Sara Cox is going back to her farming roots in the hope of helping single people living and working in Britain's rural areas find love with urbanites also seeking their perfect partner – as well as a dramatically different lifestyle.

A reliance on the land for their livelihoods, and being based within small rural communities, has limited a lot of countryside singletons' chances of finding love and someone to share the stunning scenery with.

Over the next six weeks we will get to know Paul, a farmhand from Worcestershire, and fellow thirtysomethings Christine and Richard, both cattle and sheep farmers from Dumfries and Galloway.

They are joined by Ed, 25, a dairy farmer from Lancashire, plus farrier Mark from Norfolk, Wendy, a pig farmer from Herefordshire, and Yorkshire farmer Pete, who are all in their 50s.

Equine vet Heather, 28, from Yorkshire completes the line-up.

All eight have posted their dating profiles online in the hope of attracting urban singles.

On the other side of the coin, there are a growing number of city dwellers longing to escape the smoke and migrate from town to country every year.

It all sounds very tempting, but what is the reality of adapting to a new back-to-basics setting away from all the trappings of a town or city?

Cox joins the potential couples as they negotiate getting to know each other, while the urban love-seekers grapple with wellies, the wild outdoors and woeful Wi-Fi.

"As a farmer's daughter living in the capital I'm really excited about uniting rural folks with people from the city," the 43-year-old presenter, who spent her formative years living on her family's farm in Little Lever, near Bolton, before pursuing a broadcasting career in the bright lights of London, says.

"I can't wait to journey over hill and dale, through Britain's glorious countryside on my mission to hopefully help love blossom for the people who work the land, lovingly tend their animals but may have neglected their own hearts.

"It's definitely tough living and working as a farmer," added the mother-of-three.

"You have to work such long hours on the farm and if you are in the middle of nowhere, it doesn't leave much time to go out looking for love.

"Obviously whomever you do find has to realise that farming is a vocation, you've got to love it and love the land.

"It's a big responsibility, it's hard work and you've got a lot of animals or crops to look after. Love In the Countryside is such a brilliant idea…"

So once the singletons have been matched up, will the change in pace be everything the city dwellers had always imagined?

Love In the Countryside, Wednesday, BBC2, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Tricks of the Restaurant Trade
Channel 4, 8.30pm
New series. The return of the programme that offers an inside guide to eating out, providing insights, investigations and campaigns to improve viewers' dining experience. In the first edition, Simon Rimmer finds out about Starbucks' research and development programme and meets the people who decide what its customers will be eating and drinking in the future. A woman and her son test whether phone apps can speed up service, and reporter Adam Pearson hits the high street with the latest trend in bottled water.

TUESDAY
My F-ing Tourette's Family
Channel 4, 9pm
One in 100 children have some form of Tourette's Syndrome - that is the same amount as children with autism. But despite it being relatively common condition, the general public know very little about it. For example, less than 10 per cent of people with Tourette's swear (that is known as coprolalia), and no two people with TS will have the same tics - each person is as different as every snowflake. This documentary should hopefully raise awareness and educate the public more about Tourette's, which was named after French physician Gilles De La Tourette and is an inherited neurological disorder five times more likely to affect males than females. Cameras follow Hayley and Richard Davies-Monk, and their sons Spencer, 13, and Lewis, nine. They're an Oxfordshire family who confront the daily challenges of living with the boys' uncontrollable physical and verbal 'tics' that can include inappropriate or taboo phrases.

WEDNESDAY
Heathrow: Britain's Busiest Airport
ITV, 8pm
The second-busiest airport in the world (in terms of international passengers) opens its arrivals gates once more for the ITV cameras, demonstrating the challenges faced by both staff and passengers as they go about their business of either getting where they need to go, or checking that those passing through are in safety and obeying the rules. In tonight's opening episode of the fourth series, passenger experience manager Demi has a hard time placating some disgruntled travellers, and check-in attendants Carrie-Anne and Selina have some broken baggage belts to contend with. And a young Brazilian student wants to enter the UK to visit his brother, presenting Border Force agent Bob with a dilemma.

THURSDAY
Britain's Best Home Cook
BBC1, 8pm
Mary Berry is back on the box. Not that it feels as if she's ever been away. Some may have thought that her TV career would slow down after The Great British Bake Off moved to Channel 4 without her, but not a bit of it. Instead, she's become one of the BBC's major faces, and its bosses are hoping she can turn this new series into a success. Claudia Winkleman hosts, while Berry heads a judging panel that also includes chef Dan Doherty and omnipresent produce expert Chris Bavin. Ten talented home cooks enter the competition tonight, desperate to prove they're the best in Britain. They'll be challenged to prepare classic dishes, often with their own personal spin, with the least impressive asked to leave the contest each week.

Britain's Best Home Cook, Thursday, BBC1, 8pm

FRIDAY
Our Wildest Dreams
Channel 4, 8pm
Cameras follow Lyndon and his pregnant wife Ruth as they give up their careers in the UK to plough their life savings into starting a new business running a safari lodge in the Zambian outback. The couple soon find themselves in primitive conditions, surrounded by deadly lions, elephants and crocodiles.

Lethal Weapon
ITV, 9pm
The LAPD finds itself on the hunt for a thief from a local jewellery heist. Even though the case may look fairly pedestrian from the outset, Riggs and Murtaugh soon get a reminder that all that glitters is not gold and suddenly this straightforward looking case begins to evolve into something deeper. Murtaugh is erroneously called 'grandpa' by another parent while at the playground, sending him into a spiral of insecurity.

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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

16	25	26	8	3	7	■	13	22	25	13	15	20
■	18	■	11	■	18	■	15	■	18	■	■	4
■	9	■	6	18	25	14	22	8	21	8	20	18
10	8	9	18	■	22	■	3	■	8	■	■	15
■	18	■	17	■	3	■	12	■	23	■	■	25
■	19	18	18	5	17	1	26	■	18	1	21	18
6	■	2	■	■	■	21	■	■	■	24	■	11
25 R	1	11	6	■	20	4	22	11	13	18	17	■
15 O	■	■	22	■	4	■	3	■	15	■	1	■
11	■	■	2	■	25	■	2	■	19	8	12	5
6	4	26	21	8	15	2	15	7	26	■	20	■
20	■	■	1	■	3	■	1	■	18	■	26	■
21	20	1	25	9	18	■	17	1	25	5	2	26

1	14
2	15 O
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25 R
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
X	T	Z	G	J	U	P	S	C	H	V	Y	F
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
K	D	M	O	L	I	A	W	N	R	B	E	Q

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

1 & 21Ac. Flimsy beam beneath the track is one that's easily stirred (5,7)
4 & 8Ac. It's delivered after somebody has departed (7,7)
8. See 4 Across.
9. You'll find me leaving unusual memento for the artist (5)
10. Part of the rosary, we hear, for ancient monk (4)
11. What the ringers make, sounds like a stupid mistake (8)
13. Masses of boisterous scoundrels make them, initially (4)
14. Unfinished antic to cause astonishment (4)
16. As a flag raiser, he comes second (6-2)
17. Even contest to attract the crowds? (4)
20. The vessel 'Cathy' capsized (5)
21. See 1 Across.
22. Don't expend so much - it's futile (7)
23. Staffs living in eastern Europe (5)

Down

1 & 19Dn. Sound advice for bounders (4,6,3,4)
2 & 4Dn. Certainly not a poor start to the show (5,6)
3. Neat cut (4)
4. See 2 Down.
5. Propose for the post when there's a main change in correspondence (8)
6. Sprinted to make progress in Burma (7)
7. The output of a book factory! (8,5)
12. Certainly not one in attendance (8)
13. Handcuff Maclean somehow (7)
15. Gives patient attention (6)
18. Drive back the first of the protesters in the film (5)
19. See 1 Across.

1		2		3	■	4		5		6		7
	■		■		■		■		■		■	
8							■	9				
	■		■		■		■		■		■	
10				■	11							
	■	■		12	■		■		■		■	
		13				■	14					
	■		■		■	15	■		■	■	■	
16								■	17	18		
	■		■		■		■	19	■		■	
20					■	21						
	■		■		■		■		■		■	
22							■	23				

Quick Clues:

Across

1. Covetousness (5)
4. Bevel (7)
8. Attribute (7)
9. Hurl (5)
10. Uninteresting (4)
11. Familiarise (8)
13. Average (4)
14. Hitch (4)
16. Swamp (8)
17. Overtake (4)
20. Dodge (5)
21. Outlive (7)
22. Disloyalty (7)
23. Squeeze (5)

Down

1. Bombastic (13)
2. Surpass (5)
3. Platform (4)
4. Close tightly (6)
5. Wealthy (8)
6. Fault (7)
7. Piety (13)
12. Innocuous (8)
13. Degree (7)
15. Jail (6)
18. Nimble (5)
19. Grasp (4)

Sudoku

		6		5	4		9	
3		2		6			7	
	5		7			6		8
5					6	7		
	4	9		3				
		7	5				8	9
7		1					4	
	8			7		5		2
	9		2		3			

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

4	1	5	3	2	9	8	6	7
8	9	3	4	6	7	5	2	1
6	7	2	5	8	1	9	4	3
9	4	8	6	1	5	3	7	2
7	2	6	8	3	4	1	9	5
5	3	1	9	7	2	4	8	6
3	8	7	1	9	6	2	5	4
1	6	4	2	5	8	7	3	9
2	5	9	7	4	3	6	1	8

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 3 Profusion; 8 Elan; 9 Slowcoach; 10 Formal; 11 Asses; 14 Rifle; 15 Rapt; 16 Stabs; 18 Ewer; 20 Cadet; 21 Reach; 24 Tailor; 25 Cracked up; 26 Oslo; 27 Come round. Down: 1 Performer; 2 Fair offer; 4 Roll; 5 Fawns; 6 Sooner; 7 Once; 9 Sales; 11 Awash; 12 Sandglass; 13 Stateroom; 17 Scrap; 19 Rescue; 22 Credo; 23 Ergo; 24 Turn.
QUICK - Across: 3 Statement; 8 Form; 9 Animation; 10 Energy; 11 Pored; 14 Mince; 15 Rent; 16 Event; 18 Toss; 20 Arise; 21 Scope; 24 Demand; 25 Diversion; 26 Mean; 27 Defendant. Down: 1 Aftermath; 2 Greenness; 4 Tiny; 5 Tempo; 6 Matter; 7 Noon; 9 Agree; 11 Piece; 12 Dedicated; 13 Attendant; 17 Taken; 19 Scheme; 22 Posed; 23 Hide; 24 Down.

Quiz

1. Of what is a pascal a unit?
2. Which Hindu festival's name means 'garland of lamps'?
3. What are the names of Gemini's twins?
4. Which Red Indian tribe has the largest reservation in the USA?
5. What does the legal term 'sub judice' mean?
6. Where are the annual Diamond Challenge Sculls held?
7. Which royal turned down the part of Boadicea in a Ken Russell film?
8. Which singer was born Asa Yoelson?
9. What type of pet is the Mongolian jird?
10. What is the fruit of the Prunus armeniaca tree?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Liz Taylor; 2 Egypt; 3 Yesterday;

4 A bird; 5 Iona; 6 January 6 ; 7 Dance;

8 Manna; 9 Thailand; 10 1956.

Niner: MISQUOTED

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

974329 gives a fish,
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Om! Go Greek for total relaxation

AS I set up my mat between ancient trees that poke through the circular wooden Armonia yoga deck – which means harmony in Greek – my lungs are grateful for the fresh mountain, forest and sea air.

I perform sun salutations while birds chirp away in the treetops, and waves softly crash on the shore below. I'm watched solemnly by one of around a dozen adopted cats that roam F Zeen resort.

Hidden away on an Ionian hillside, in the shadow of Mount Ainos, nestled into sloping forest that rolls down onto Lourdas seafront, this adult-only wellness retreat enjoys the best of Kefalonia's bewitching landscapes.

Why is Kefalonia a recharge retreat?

Kefalonia – the largest of the cluster of Ionian Islands dotted along the west coast of the Greek mainland – is also one of the least densely populated. It is incredibly green and lush, with Mount Ainos – the dramatic backdrop that towers above F Zeen – classified as the only national park on a Greek island.

What's the F Zeen story?

F Zeen was a term in ancient Greek used to sum up 'the good life', and the resort does everything it can to promote that. Open for its first full season in 2016, it's truly a family affair, with mother, father, sons and daughter all involved in the day-to-day running.

Matriarch Suzanne Koumoudos, who with her Greek husband Dennis owns a sprawling collection of luxury Kefalonian villas, tells me that food has always been a huge family passion, and that when they went on holiday, they were always looking for a hotel with a gym, so they could indulge.

And so the idea for F Zeen was born. With pared back yet luxurious nature-inspired rooms, three freshwater swimming pools, Jacuzzis, a spa, daily group gym and yoga classes, it's an inspiring place to slow down and reconnect with yourself.

So tranquil – the yoga deck at F Zeen

Relax by the pool or the restaurant terrace

Do you need to be a yoga bunny to enjoy the space?

Yoga teacher Anastasia Koumoudos gently guides groups through a series of rejuvenating and relaxing poses, but guests can use the equipment whenever they like. For the more adventurous, aerial yoga sessions can be arranged.

A split-level outdoor gym – complete with cardio machines, free weights, personal training sessions and a sublime sea view – is also available. Steps away from the retreat at F Zeen's on-the-beach activity hub, guests can take out paddleboards and kayaks for no extra cost. They can also borrow bikes and maps of local hikes.

What's the spa like?

The spa uses organic seaweed from the Irish Sea, sourced by the family-run company Voya. A small team of therapists use hand-harvested leaves in treatments, including baths, massages, masks and wraps for their antioxidant and anti-ageing properties.

What's the food like?

F Zeen now boasts two restaurants which offer healthy Greek dishes with a modern twist, using recipes passed down by the Koumoudos family's grandmother.

What else is there to do?

Kefalonia is famed for its honey, and a trip to the nearby Dias Apiary (£14) – a 20-minute drive from the retreat – proves to be an unexpected delight. We hear fascinating anecdotes about the winged creatures 'dancing'.

If bees aren't your thing, a plethora of other activities are on offer. The ruins of the Sissia monastery are just over a 30-minute walk away. The monastery is believed to have been founded by St Francis of Assisi in the 13th century.

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Good looking with sporty tweaks

By Carmel Stewart

The Vauxhall Insignia GSi brings us right back to the days when the roads weren't crowded with cars, the motorways weren't constantly at a standstill and driving still had an element of fun.

With improved rigidity and much lighter than the previous holder of the 'performance' rosette, the Insignia VXR*, this new model handles brilliantly, whether on the track or the open road – remember them?

It is available either as a Grand Sport hatchback or a Sports Tourer estate. Both are good looking, with aerodynamic styling; the added sporty tweaks and twirls and serious re-engineering have combined to make this a driving experience which balances performance and comfort – flattering some and stretching others.

Styling cues include GSi front and rear body styling and side sills with a large rear spoiler, 20-inch alloys and tinted rear windows.

The chassis has been lowered by 10mm as compared to the standard Insignia, while special springs, dampers, tyres, wheel hubs, stabilizer bar, Brembo brakes and drive shafts have all been added with performance in mind. In addition, Vauxhall has tweaked its FlexRide chassis specially for the GSi so that steering response, suspension damping and the torque-vectoring all-wheel drive system can be adjusted by selecting Normal, Tour or Sport.

For those for whom speed is an essential element, there is an ESC Competitive mode which is engaged by double-pressing the ESC button, allowing confident drivers to 'achieve maximum cornering speeds on a circuit. It allows for greater slip angles to match a more aggressive driving style.'

There are tinted rear windows

Engine choices are very straightforward – 2.0litre turbo petrol or 2.0litre bi-turbo diesel. The latter 210ps unit produces 480 Nm of torque at 1,500 rpm and has a top speed of 145mph.

For those who like the techie stuff, during normal driving the engine is in two-stage mode so there is super sharp throttle response. At high speeds, it switches over to single-stage for maximum airflow and efficiency. The petrol unit is no slouch either, packing as it does 260ps/400Nm of torque with a top speed red lining at 155mph.

Both are married to a super smooth eight-speed automatic transmission with parameters tweaked for optimum shift points, with paddles included as standard.

Expect an average 40.4mpg from the diesel and 32.8mpg from the petrol.

Styling cues include GSi front and rear body styling and side sills

Inside, the sporty intentions are evident from the moment the door is opened – metal pedals, heated flat bottomed steering wheel and specially designed leather sports seats. These at first look and feel as if they are gripping in all the wrong places.

Two hours later, after a drive encompassing a mixture of highway, byways and motorways, you'll emerge and realise they were a perfect fit.

On the road the GSi proved pacey and precise, with stunningly solid road holding, and unwavering composure.

Prices start at £32,975 for the Grand Sport and £34,475 for the Sports Tourer which includes a very decent amount of kit as well as that brilliantly balanced, dynamic driving experience.

Standard spec includes an excellent head-up display, navigation, leather sport seats, heated front and outer seats plus drive and passenger massage facility.

Optional extras worth considering are the sunroofs (£705 for the Grand Sport and £960 for the Sport Tourer), the rear-view camera at £350, and the wireless charger at £160.

* The introduction of GSi does not signal the end of VXR, says Vauxhall, adding: "The VXR is a "hardcore" sports car, one that is ready for weekend outings on a race track. We are continuing to evaluate what future VXR models might be like."

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How to improve a car's performance by 70%

The effectiveness consultancy Benchmarketing recently analysed what happens when companies include press advertising in their media mix.

They looked at more than 500 econometric models, covering a five-year period and, as the table here shows, they found that adding newspapers dramatically increases the effectiveness of other media.

In the automotive sector they reviewed companies that ranged from the big spending German goliaths of the industry to medium sized independent carmakers.

And they discovered that by adding newspaper advertising to their campaigns, they cranked up their effectiveness by over 70%.

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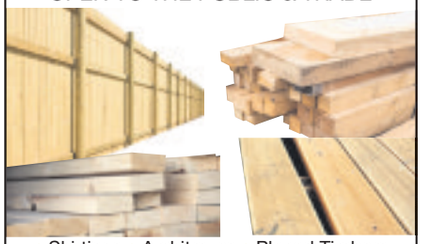

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Brought to you by Express & Star

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DELIVERY AVAILABLE
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CALL IAN. Man with a large van. No job too small, no distance too far. 07973 628534, 01902 891535.

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Professional service,
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www.mgroofingwestmidlands.co.uk

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Skip Hire

BIG JOHN MOVES RUBBISH! No Skips, we load, fast friendly service, 25 Lister Rd, Dudley DY2 8JR, Est 40 years, 01384 232359.

4 Pets & Animals

Equestrian Corner

ALL READERS are advised to check if Horses, Donkeys or Ponies have the required Passport information, this is a legal requirement.

Guns & Dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

WEIHRAUCH .22 AIR RIFLE with scope, immaculate, £225. 01902 373266.

Pets Corner

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:
1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree.
Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

CHIHUAHUA PUPPIES Four months old, two boys, £500 each. 01902 651019.

GINGER KITTEN, tom, almost four months, vaccinated, microchipped, £150 ono. 07547 481118.

KIND HOMES WANTED

CHANTAL Small, pretty, young Border Collie X Whippet. Lovely girl. Needs another dog to play with.

FRED Three year old big boy, black and white Border Collie. Good with children.

JACK Black and white Border Collie, lovely lad with a nice temperament.

POLLY Nine year old Labrador X Boxer, nice natured, good on lead, only dog.

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All neutered, innoculated and microchipped.
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5 Business & Farming

Business Opportunities

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6 Property

Accommodation To Let

NOTICE TO READERS
It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments/contracts.

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WOMBOURNE WV5
Attractive, spacious Ground floor maisonette in popular location.
3 double bedrooms, lounge, kitchen, bathroom, storage, laundry, DG and GCH.
Communal garden.
Tenure: leasehold
£135,000 ono.
07834 782677.

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Wolverhampton: Call 01902 489901
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Near to Willenhall town centre.
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£77,500 ono.
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or 07709 528229.

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SHOWROOM CONDITION

PARK HOME STATELY ALBION
2 bedroom, one ensuite. Plus bathroom. Recent carpet fitted throughout, double unit.
Close to Shrewsbury.
£89,995.
Telephone 01691 682118 or 07975 643737.

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Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

8 Motoring

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BMW 520D SE
2010, 80K miles, MoT October 2018, metallic black, full black leather interior, aircon, radio / CD, Sat Nav, 6 speed manual, alloys.
£6,500
07570 668275.

CITROEN C3 PICASSO 1.6HDi
63 reg, new MoT, new service/tyres, 74,000 miles.
£3,500 ono.
Telephone 01902 682321.

FIAT 500 DIESEL BY DESIGN (model not fuel)
2011, 55,600 miles, Diesel green metallic, EW, stop/start, AC, Bluetooth, usb, glass roof, CD player, CL, MOT, 1 previous owner, alloys, tinted rear windows, spare wheel, tool kit, fsh.
£4,500 ono.
07918 621300 (no text)

FIAT 500 LOUNGE
2012, white, alloys, air con, panoramic roof, white steering wheel, head rests and dashboard, EW, start/stop, CD/radio, Bluetooth, £30 road tax, excellent condition.
£3,950 o.n.o.
07973 483797.

FORD B-MAX
Limited Edition, 16 plate, 1388 engine, 10,000 miles, silver metallic, black roof, black alloys, petrol, blue tooth, radio / CD, aircon, front fog lights, electric window, sliding back doors, Immaculate condition.
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*** Cheaper than ebay!

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ONLY £9.99** FOR 6 NIGHTS IN PRINT AND ONLINE

FIAT PUNTO 1.0
2001, bright red, 55,000 miles, 6 months MoT, radio/CD player, new tyres, some history, ideal first car.
Advert example only
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01902 123456.

PEUGEOT 207 2.0 PETROL
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Advert example only.
£2,600 o.n.o
01902 123456.

RENAULT LAGUNA 2.0 DIESEL
2005, 5dr, black metallic, full MOT, 56K, dealer serviced, sat nav, fsh, leather interior, in car DVD system, excellent condition, (Advert example only)
£2,500 o.n.o
01902 123456.

4 GREAT REASONS TO SELL YOUR CAR IN THE EXPRESS & STAR

1. We reach over **680,000** potential buyers a week.
2. At only £9.99 we give **UNRIVALLED** value for money.
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** Private advertisers only
*** Ebay Price checked 2/1/2018

ClassifiedAds

MUST BE SEEN

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Classic saloon, November 2005, manual, MoT February 2019, 47,400 miles, very economical, alloy wheels, very good condition.
£2,595
01384 291853.

LOOK

LAND ROVER FREELANDER ESTATE TURBO DIESEL
Black, low mileage, service history, 55 reg, good condition, new battery and brake tubes, 10 months MoT.
£2,500 ono.
Telephone 07943 401208.

PEUGEOT 107 URBAN 1.0
3 door, 58 reg, 2008, 53k, fsh, new clutch, 12 months MoT and serviced last week, 3 months Warranty, superb condition.
£2,100.
07867 473870.

BARGAIN

SEAT LEON 1.6
2011, automatic, diesel, 70,000 miles, Sat Nav, fsh, sky blue, a/c, sunroof, excellent condition inside and out.
Drives like new.
£4,995 ono
Telephone 07824 640177 or 07506 178870.

IMMACULATE

VAUXHALL CORSA STING 1.2
2015, 64 plate, red with sporty white stripes, excellent condition, MoT January 2019, Vauxhall FSH, 22,650 miles.
£4,800 ono
07473 802391.

VW PASSAT 2.0 DIESEL AUTO
2010, 6 months MoT, 80,000 miles, new cam belt, cruise control, alloys, EW, heated seats.
£4,295 ono.
07852 778352.

Cars Under £1500

DODGE CALIBER MPV SPORT
06, TD, 80k, fsh, steel wheels, twin exhaust, eye catcher, reluctant sale.
£1,400.
07848 820177.

FORD FIESTA FREESTYLE 1.2 ZETEC
02, one owner, full MoT, alarm, very good condition inside and out.
£595
07462 722613.

FORD MONDEO 1.8 CDTi
Mot till December.
Very clean, good runner.
Cam belt changed, new spark plugs, fanstic family car.
Fully electric,
£1,250.
07730 596969.

LOW MILEAGE

NISSAN X TRIAL
Diesel, 83,000 miles,
MoT, drives well,
£1,175 ono.
07547 566395.

ROVER 45 DIESEL
2002,
owned from new, FSH, reliable and economical, long MoT.
£450 ono
07396 190155.

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WANTED, CLASSIC Car. Private cash buyer. Any condition, anything considered.
01630 652993 or 07773 462797.

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THIS COULD BE YOURS

HONDA C90 CUB
P reg, 7,300 miles, genuine original condition, 12 months MoT.
Collectable Classic.
£1,400.
07764 944771

KAWASAKI F6 125 TRAIL, 1972, American import, runs well, great project, £950 ono.
Telephone 01902 741598.

KAWASAKI GPZ500S. MOT until June 26. P reg, 30,920 miles. Shock replaced about 500 miles ago. £1,000 ono. 07789 173302.

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A BETTER PRICE
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alan reed cars
Used cars wanted for cash
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Renault Scenic, Vauxhall Zafira, Renault Clio, Ford Focus & KA and MANY MORE!!
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30 yrs experience
ALL AREAS COVERED
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9 Local Information

Public Notices

PUBLIC & LEGAL NOTICES
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(remember to include a name/ contact number for confirmation of receipt)

10 Personals

Personal

LOVELY, ATTRACTIVE LADY
Intelligent, kind, sociable, 64.
WLTM genuine, intelligent, well dressed male to enjoy theatre, restaurants, travel etc.
Box Number P21154 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

RETIRED MALE, 70
Fit, active, non smoker, Young at heart.
WLTM a female, non smoker, 60-70 for Friendship, nights out, theatre, holidays and who knows, a long term relationship.
Box Number P21155 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

Sports Clubs

DUDLEY SPORTS 6-A-SIDE SUMMER TOURNAMENT
Saturday May 19, Sunday, May 20, 2018.
Saturday morning session, U'6s, U'8s, U'13s.
Afternoon session U'10s, U'12s, U'14s
Sunday, morning session U'7s, U'9s and U'11s,
Afternoon session, U15's boys, Girls, U10's to U16's
Download application form **www.dudleysportsjfc.co.uk or ring Fred 07788 684258.**

You should be able to trust the ads you see.

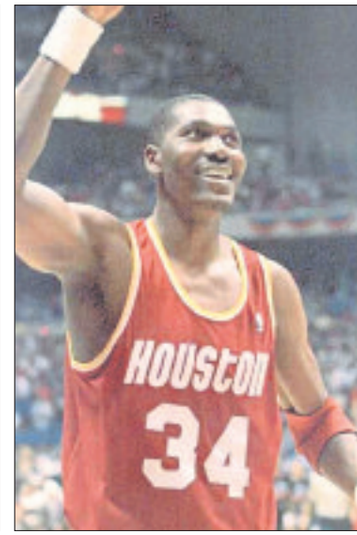
If an ad is wrong, the ASA is here to put it right.

ASA.org.uk
Advertising Standards Authority

On the ball – coaching expert Clive

With Jamie Bunch, of the Albion Foundation

Clive's basketball daughter Dominique celebrates winning silver for England in Australia



Backing efforts – ex-NBA star Hakeem Olajuwon

Dudley-born Clive seen during his playing days

We can bounce back, but only with funding – Allen

A LACK of Government funding for basketball across the UK is nearing critical levels.

That's according to Clive Allen, who enjoyed a stellar two-decade career in the British Basketball League (BBL), and is now one of the most prominent coaches in the Black Country.

Basketball, although an American import, is now the second most played team sport in the country – only behind football.

The game is played on the streets, on courts in parks and at sports centre across the country, particular in urban areas.

Dudley-born Allen, who played for the now defunct Birmingham Bullets for 15 years, winning two championship titles, is now head coach of the basketball section at Sporting Club Albion, which in turn forms part of the Albion Foundation.

With a rich background in playing and coaching in the game, he has been in prime position to see how lack of funding has affected the sport he loves.

Thousands

"We have never really got a lot of funding from the Government, especially when compared with football," said Allen, whose funding for his team comes directly from the West Bromwich Albion Football Club.

"It becomes so relevant from my position where I can see all the money flowing in – football gets thousands and we get nothing.

"All my team funding comes through West Brom and the basketball players themselves."

Sports Minister Tracey Crouch recently said she held 'positive and constructive' talks with British basketball representatives about concerns over funding.

The meeting followed criticism the sport received nothing from UK Sport and warnings the national teams were close to folding.

UK Sport basis its funding on medal prospects and Allen said basketball found itself in a 'chicken and egg' situation.

"We don't get any money because of the medal prospects but we won't win medals without any funding," he said.

SPORTING FEATURE

By James Driver-Fisher

'We don't get any money because of the medal prospects but we won't win medals without any funding'

"There are so many people participating in basketball with clubs all over the country but it desperately needs more funding. Money is only going to the sports that are performing well but we are never going to do well in the Olympics without any money.

"We have some good players now mainly playing in the US and even in the NBA but England and Great Britain cannot afford the insurance needed to bring them back to play from their clubs for the country."

Britain's finest export is arguably Luol Deng, who now plays for the LA Lakers in the NBA.

He helped Team GB reach the London Olympics but now the national side cannot afford to cover his insurance and get him to play.

"We want the best players playing over here but we're not getting the money to do it," said Allen, whose daughter Dominique was part of the Team England side that won silver for basketball in the Commonwealth Games in Australia.

"If we could get all our best players back we would have a strong squad.

"Basketball is still a growing sport and there are so many kids taking part all over the country.

"And, no disrespect to other sports, but you also see how much is pumped into the likes of netball and it's very frustrating. Why can't we at least get some of it?

"When I'm running a session it costs about £50 to hire the court out for about an hour so then you're having to charge the kids £4 to £5 for the session."

The West Brom basketball teams have expanded from two to 12 since Allen took over in 2009, covering U14s up to the men's, which are now linked with Dudley College, Sandwell College and Wolverhampton University.

Allen said the lack of BBL teams in the West Midlands area – with Leicester Riders and Worcester Wolves currently the nearest clubs to the Black Country and Birmingham – was affecting funding and the direction of the sport locally.

The Bullets folded in 2006 as did the Birmingham Panthers and Birmingham Knights franchises soon after.

"Birmingham hasn't had its own team now for more well over five years so when you're trying to promote basketball in schools, colleges and universities it gets more difficult when there's no support or path for them to follow," he said.

"A football camp can get anything up to 300 kids coming along but we'll be lucky to get 50. The football fans can meet the players and tour the stadium.

"The closest we have are Worcester Wolves or Leicester Riders.

Rockets

"The BBL Cup final is held at Arena Birmingham, which is something for the city, but none of the teams who make the finals are going to be local to the area.

"It's vital we get a team back up and running again to represent and support the Black Country and Birmingham."

Allen, who won five England caps, said the best option for the region appeared to be the City of Birmingham Rockets Basketball Club.

The potential relaunch has also received backing of former NBA star Hakeem Olajuwon, renowned as one of the finest ever players to grace the game.

Allen said: "His daughter goes to university in Birmingham and he bought a property over here and is interested in supporting the move.

"The team could be called the Birmingham Rockets in recognition of his time playing for the Houston Rockets in the NBA. It's early days but that seems to be the most promising option at present."

For further information about Allen's coaching programmes, call 07702 369606 or email clive.allen@albionfoundation.co.uk

New boys Wood edge to indoor game glory

COOMBS WOOD have completed a stunning WCB North Division Indoor Cricket League season by being crowned champions.

The newcomers snatched the title in dramatic fashion, topping the table on batting average only after finishing level on points with runners-up Oldswinford and Stourbridge. A tense final round of games saw Coombs Wood overcome Enville.

Tom Bingham, Greg Tomkins and Jono Howells all scored 25 for Enville as they posted 103-3. Dan Jones (25) and Carl Whyte (19) then led Coombs Wood's victory charge. And their title success was confirmed when Stourbridge, leaders for a number of weeks, lost to national champions Hagley in their final game.

Stourbridge made 93-4 thanks to 33 Ali Rashid and 22 from Mikesh Jivan-Patel. But an unbeaten 37 from Lee Nightingale saw Hagley home in the final over. Coombs Wood now play in the county final night in Worcester for the right to enter the national championship next year.

Village bowls trio called up for county

M&B CHESLYN HAY have seen three bowlers called up for Staffordshire's Midland Alliance competition.

Jack Hill, Jamie Webb and Reece Farr will be hoping to help Staffs taste success in the event after landing a place in the 10-man squad.

The event, often referred to as the County B tournament, takes place on Sunday, in Doncaster, South Yorkshire where the Staffordshire team will compete against sides from Derbyshire, the Potteries, Warwick & Worcester, North Midlands & South Yorkshire.

Bill Staite, county team manager said: "Since I became manager in 2016, three players from the 2016 alliance squad and five from the 2017 group, have all successfully progressed to represent the full county side."

The full squad is as follows: Jack Hill, Jamie Webb, Reece Farr (all M&B Cheslyn Hay), James Duce, Rob Perry (Penn), Stuart Gittings, Daniel Statham (Stile), Shelton Orpe (Chadsmoor), Ross Edwards and Dan Bodley (Willenhall Nordley).

More evidence call over fans' standing

THE Premier League said more evidence is needed before safe-standing can be introduced at top flight games. In a statement, league chiefs said research showed a clear majority of fans want the option of being able to stand during a game but only one in 20 wants to stand for the whole game.

The research, conducted by polling firm Populus over the last 16 months, was discussed by club chiefs at the Premier League shareholders' meeting in London. Last week it emerged that sports minister Tracey Crouch rejected a request from Albion to install 3,600 rail seats at The Hawthorns.

She later said she was "not convinced" of the arguments for repealing the all-seater rule, believing only a "vocal minority" want to stand and clubs should use existing legislation to force fans who persistently stand to sit down. This prompted an angry response from the English Football League, the Football Supporters' Federation (FSF), West Brom's safety officer and fans across the country, with an online petition for safe standing on the government's website attracting almost 65,000 supporters in a week.

Sport

Basketball's Clive hopes sport can bounce back

See page 35

Fox finds Aston's flaw in second round

THERE was disappointment for Dudley middleweight Ryan Aston who slipped to defeat at the fists of Wiltshire's Anthony Fox at Walsall Town Hall on Saturday night .

After a decent opener, Aston looked in control of proceedings but Fox came back in the second and dropped Aston with a stiff right hand in the third. 'Tank' was quickly on his feet but couldn't stop Fox taking the fourth round to record a slightly generous, if deserved, 40-37 win.

Tipton light heavyweight Ricky Summers put in a solid display as he topped BCB Promotions' 'Time To Shine' bill. The 30 year-old was due to fight for an IBO Continental Title but a late pull out meant Summers took on Bulgarian Teyar Mehmed over six rounds.

Digger boxed well behind a solid jab to record a 60-53 and now has his eyes on a shot at the English or British strap.

Fellow English title contender, Halesowen super middleweight, Lennox Clarke, was also in action. The 26-year-old was due to challenge English Champion Darryl Williams on the postponed Billy Joe Saunders versus Martin Murray bill last weekend but, following an injury to BJS, has saw that chance postponed until the summer.

Clarke stepped in to keep active and took on Wilmer Gonzalez. He punished his Nicaraguan opponent after Gonzalez came in almost a stone over the 12st 4lb agreed limit,; stopping him inside a round.

Wolverhampton's Polish welterweight Damian Kiwior defeated Mario Petrov.

Agbor strike decides title destination

Warrington Town 1 Halesowen Town 1

A SECOND-HALF goal from substitute Roland Agbor earned Halesowen a point and put paid to Warrington's title chances.

The home side needed to win to put pressure on Altrincham but the draw saw the latter crowned champions after they beat Grantham.

Warrington made all the running in the first half on a sunny afternoon in Cheshire, forcing a number of corners and free kicks as they looked for the vital breakthrough.

Halesowen goalkeeper Daniel Platt had to be at his best to turn away shots from Shaun Beeley. William Hayhurst and Gerard Kinsella also hit the underside of the bar.

For Yeltz Daniel Bragoli sent Lee Hughes through on 38 minutes but the ball was taken off the former Albion striker on the edge of the box.

The pressure did finally pay off for the home side in the 57th minute when Mekhi Leacock-McLeod crossed for an unmarked Jamie McDonald to sweep home for the home side in the 57th minute.

But an inspired substitution by Halesowen boss John Hill saw Agbor come on for Daniel Byrnes. He had an almost immediate impact when he applied a neat finish to a Jack Kelly cross to level the scores.

Safe from relegation, Halesowen were playibng their penultimate league game at Mickleover yesterday (Wednesday) before hosting Stalybridge on Saturday.

Heat was on in London as club took on marathon

ALL roads led to London at the weekend as athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club joined more than 40,000 other runners, including the UK's most successful distance runner Mo Farah, in the London Marathon.

Soaring heat conditions were particularly difficult after a winter of freezing temperatures and as the mercury started to rise on Sunday runners started to fall.

It was very much an endurance event with many seeing good times fall away and for many just crossing that finish line was an achievement.

Kevin Duckworth was first home for the hoops in 3.09.58 in 1,917th place, Darran Bishop came home in 3.42.06 in 6,198th, Lisa Kendrick was 11,613rd in 4.10.21.

Marie Latreche came home in 4.17.17 in 13,049th, Sergej Lyubovnikov was 19,951st in 4.47.18, Simon Blizzard finished in 4.53.02 in 21,363rd, Paula Alder in 5.18.43 in 27,033, Brian Lane in 5.24.02 in 28,230 and John Andrews in 5.32.23 in 29,820th.

BIG MACC WIN STOPS STOUR

Macclesfield 50 Stourbridge 33

HOME advantage proved a key ingredient in this 12-try thriller that included a 20 points tally for Macc's Lewis Barker.

But the visitors made the first impact straight from the kick off when Stour won a scrum penalty and were unfortunate not to secure three points as the post defeated Robbie Forbes' kick.

Three minutes late Macc conceded another penalty, this time for a high tackle, and Rod Petty's pop pass found Hal Riley who was unstoppable at short range. This time Forbes made no mistake with the kick. Stef Thorp cantered in untouched giving Forbes a simple conversion and making it 0-14 with nine minutes on the clock.

This galvanised the home team as Dan Lomax scored the first try in his hat-trick and Lewis Barker's first kick out of a tally of seven successes. His fellow centre Sam Broster was next on the score sheet after Stour gave away another high tackle penalty.

Macc took the lead via Lomax's second try for Barker to convert. The hosts' bonus point try came before the half hour mark. Livewire scrum-half Nick Allsop added five more points Stour were to finish the half with a flourish when Joe Heatley scored and Forbes hit perhaps the most difficult conversion of the afternoon.

Macc came out all guns blazing and their quick offloads started to sap Stour's defence. It took three minutes for Barker to score his second try and Barker crashed over for a self converted score. Lomax hit his third and Barker's conversion meant a 40-21 home lead. Stourbridge won a penalty five minutes later. George Morgan touched down, Forbes converted and consolation came from this bonus point try.

Barker kicked a simple penalty to stretch the lead, followed by a Miles Hall try. Stour were down to 14 men when Heatley was binned and the resulting penalty created space for Hall's try and Barker's last kick. Nicholas Murphy who was able to pirouette out of a tackle and touch down and the final whistle blew after an unsuccessful conversion attempt.

England call for boxer Sahil

Sahil Khan triumphed in the 50kg weight category at the National Junior Championships

A TALENTED Dudley boxer has his sights set on further success after he was called-up to represent England at two major tournaments.

Sahil Khan triumphed in the 50kg weight category at the National Junior Championships in Rotherham last month. The victory, Khan's second national title, means he has now been selected to represent England in a tri-nations competition with Scotland and Wales in May.

He will also head out to Russia in October to represent his country in the European Championships.

Khan, 15, is a member of Merridale Boxing Club in Wolverhampton. He is coached by Mick Smith and Paul Smith. Their assistant Kad Khan said: "Sahil is a very talented boy who has got all the tools and the ambition to go as far as he wants."

Gould gains a point for Glassboys

Lancaster City 0 Stourbridge 0

STOURBRIDGE drew a blank following their long distance trip to Lancaster but still managed to climb three league places.

The Glassboys had goalkeeper Matt Gould to thank for keeping the eager home side at bay, as he pulled off a string of fine saves.

Stourbridge should have gone ahead after 12 minutes when Chris Gallagher put Wolves loanee Nicu Carnat in the clear, but he failed to hit the target, rolling his effort the wrong side of the post.

Lancaster always looked the more likely side to break the deadlock and should have gone ahead on 21 minutes when Paul Jarvis headed Ryan Winder's cross wide at the far post. Gould proved in great form tipping Craig Carney's shot over the crossbar on 31 minutes and then diving low to turn a Simon Wills shot around the post a minute later.

Glassboys came close to snatching the lead when Brad Birch's cross just evaded Carnat on 58 minutes while Aaron Forde fired wide after Lancaster failed to clear Gallagher's corner four minutes later.

Carney completely mis-kicked in front of goal on 75 minutes. It was Gould who came to the rescue again when diving to turn a Winder shot around the post with four minutes remaining.

After a trip to Barwell, Stour were due to round off the Northern Premier League campaign with home games against Stafford Rangers tonight (Thursday) and Hednesford on Saturday.

Bardsley upgrades table tennis title

STOURBRIDGE'S Charlotte Bardsley 'upgraded' from the Under-16 to Under-19 title at the Butterfly National School Individual Championships.

The England player, who attends Heathfield School, Wolverley, won the Under-16 title last year and this time took home the top age category crown after working her way through group and knockout stages.

She overcame Mollie Patterson in the final.

It was a clash between the top two seeds and Bardsley, the No 1, took it 3-1 (11-9, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7).

★★★

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